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Books by EDWARD LUCAS WHITE

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HELEN

The story of the Romance of Helen of Troy, born Helen of Sparta, and of Aithre, mother of King Theseus of Attica, who became Helen's bondslave, handmaid and foster-mother

BY

EDWARD LUCAS WHITE

Decorated by
THEODORE NADEJEN

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FOREWORD

THIS is the story of the romance of Helen of Troy, born Helen of Sparta, and of her three husbands, Menelaus of Sparta, Paris of Troy and Deiphobus of Troy; told in seven tales, the seven crises of her life.

It is also the story of the romance of Aithre (Eye-thray), daughter of King Pittheus of Trœzene, wife of King Ægeus of Athens, mother of King Theseus of Attica, who became Helen's bond-slave, handmaid and foster-mother, and whose prescience and subtlety were determining factors at each turning-point of Helen's life.

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I: APHIDNÆ

I: APHIDNÆ

AITHRE, her embroidery frame still in her left hand, had risen from her carved oak armchair at the end of the great hall. She stood her tallest, and she was a tall woman; also she looked her stateliest, for she was tingling with a premonition that the moment marked a perilous crisis in all their lives. Her garment was a loose robe of soft lambs'-wool, the white fabric decorated with borders of red, green and blue, their leaf and flower patterns twining about figures of running stags and bulls and pursuing wolves and lions. Her smooth, glossy brown hair was held in place by a ribbon of cloth of gold. Very dignified and queenly she looked to her son and his crony as they advanced the length of the hall towards her. She noted that they wore the full regalia proper for kings performing a solemn sacrifice for guidance on a momentous decision.

Theseus, naturally, spoke first.

"Mother," he said, "Peirithoos and I have made a covenant, have pledged ourselves to carry it out, and have taken oath to fulfil our pledges. As we

are both widowers, we need wives. As the wives we once had were paragons, neither of us would be satisfied with a mediocre mate. Most unjustly, but far and wide, among all men to whom rumour has carried reports of our high renown, both of us have acquired an unenviable reputation for venturesome recklessness and impetuous rashness, so that any powerful and wealthy father of a desirable and marriageable daughter would shudder with horror at the merest hint of giving his child to either of us. We have both experienced rebuffs, and we are not men to endure or invite rebuffs, expressed or implied. If we are to win wives of the sort we want there is nothing for it but for us to carry off the maidens we covet and make our peace later with their fathers. We have sworn each to help the other to the wife of his heart. It so happens that the same princess is the first choice of each of us. We have therefore agreed to set off together amicably, as cronies and partners, carry her off and away and get her safely into our possession; then to cast lots for her, the winner to help the loser to win for wife any maid he thereafter designates. We set off tomorrow morning. Prepare us a farewell banquet for this evening. Meantime we shall put off these ceremonial habiliments, rest, bathe, and wreathe our heads with garlands of poplar leaves, as adventurers should."

Midway of the banquet, when Aithre judged her son in as good a humour as possible, she said:

"You have not told me, boy, what maiden you two plan to abduct."

"Nor shall we," Theseus answered, smiling. "We might fail, in spite of all our courage and cunning. So we prefer to tell you only after our success. But I can assure you that we are to return here in any case. Our objective lies southwards and if the lot falls to Peirithoos he must pass through here on his way home. Be content with that, Mother."

And the two smiled at each other, comprehendingly and affectionately.

The expedition set off in the first grey glimmer of the next dawn, so early that Theseus and Peirithoos loomed vaguely in their two-horsed chariots and the column of marching spearmen melted into the haze before they vanished behind the low hills to the southwestwards. Long after Aithre, staring through the haze, was no longer able to descry any indication of where they were, she heard far-off and faint and fainter the high, shrill, thin, piercing screech of the unlubricated chariot-wheels.

Many days passed, very alike, the sky mostly

clear and hot overhead, the parched landscape shimmering in the heat. Aithre was seldom at leisure, what with inspecting the arrangements for defence, if needful, and for alert lookout at all times of the day and night, with approving the dispositions made by the chief of her men-at-arms, with nursing the few of them who fell ill, with superintending the daily routine of the fortress, the cookery, the spinning and weaving of her handmaids, and many other matters.

Twilight was fading into dusk when the fleetest of her son's runners announced to Aithre his approach, safe and successful, his henchmen convoying booty. Dusk was deepening into night when the convoy drew near, so that, long after she could hear the shrill screech of the far-off chariot-wheels, Aithre, straining her eyes as she leaned over the parapet of one of the gateway towers, could make out dimly no more than a blurred suggestion of a column of marching men, with pack-animals among them.

She had the courtyard lined with torch-bearers and the flares lit in the eight cressets. Cressets and torches were just well ablaze when first Theseus and then Peirithoos drove his chariot through the massive stone gateway. Following them came a band of spearmen, then a press of led mules and donkeys, most of them under heavy packs. Among these was

a litter, closely curtained, carried by eight sturdy bearers, the litter, its bearers and a score of reliefs clumped about it, all hedged in by a ring of pikemen. Behind the animals came the main body of men-at-arms.

"Mother," said Theseus, "by strategy and surprise we achieved in an hour what no valour could have accomplished. There was almost no fighting, we lost few men. And, when we cast lots for our prize, I won."

"Where is your prize, my son?" Aithre queried.

He led her towards the litter, the muleteers, pikemen and litter-bearers making way for them. When they paused beside the litter Theseus pulled aside one of its curtains and Aithre found herself gazing, fascinated, at the most beautiful human face she had ever beheld.

"Surely," she exclaimed, "this is a daughter of Tyndarus and Leda!"

"Even so!" Theseus triumphed.

"But, son," his mother cried, "she is a mere child! It will be years yet before she is marriageable! You have risked your life, your throne, your kingdom, your people, for a mere child!"

"Even so!" Theseus repeated.

"Don't argue, Mother," he added. "She is a child surpassing all women, grown or ungrown. Make haste! Bathe her and offer her food, put

her to bed and to sleep. She needs all the care you can give her, and at once!"

Except the sentinels on the walls and towers every human being in Aphidnæ slept heavily that night and late the next morning till broad daylight.

They slept, in fact, much of the day and through the next night.

During the following day Aithre found her son, while still barely half awake, not too sleepy for a talk with her. She drew an armchair closer to the bed where he lay half-dozing among his pillows, his huge arms outside the coverlets.

"How did you do it, boy?" she queried.

Theseus grinned.

"Peirithoos," he said, "is a master of wood-craft. We sneaked southwards so slowly that I raged, so deviously that we marched three times the direct distance; by day we threaded glens or wooded mountain-sides, or skulked well inside the margin of some forest; by night we slunk across bare valleys or arid plains or over treeless hills. I fumed. But Peirithoos was right. Not only no alarm-beacon was lit before our advance, not only no hue and cry dogged our return, but I seriously believe that no town or countryside along our line of march knew then or knows yet that we passed by.

"Lurking among the oaks and beeches of the southernmost spur of Sciris, we saw march up the

upper valley of the Eurotas a force so large that we made sure that not half a garrison was left in Sparta. The gods were with us. We had had the incredible luck to time our foray so as to come within striking distance just as the Arcadians had again become so troublesome that there was need of another futile invasion of their hills to chastise, or, at least, to daunt them. From our ambush we distinctly made out leading the columns not only Castor and Pollux, but Tyndarus himself.

"After they had passed the rest was easy. We timed our onset so as to reach Sparta just before the late moonrise. The darkness helped us to overwhelm the bewildered garrison, the moonrays aided us in selecting our captives and our spoil. We returned as we went, unhindered. Have you examined the booty?"

"I have," Aithre smiled; "indeed a queen's dowry. Never have I seen such silver mixing-bowls, such gold goblets, such jewelled belts and necklaces and bracelets and rings. I was dazzled."

"And Helen?" he queried.

"I was more dazzled," she confessed, "and I do not blame you a bit. She is worth risking anything for: lands and wealth and subjects and throne and life itself. She is worth waiting for. I am in love

with her, myself, already. She is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld, and she has a way with her. She calls me 'mother' as naturally as if she were my own daughter, and I love her as if she were my daughter indeed. I have always wanted a daughter of my own. I liked Hippolyta, but I could not love her, although she was handsome. I could not feel at home with nor fond of a woman who spent her time in driving her own chariot, in horse-taming, in practising archery, in spear-throwing, and in general, in all sorts of masculine occupations. She never seemed like a daughter to me, nor like a woman at all, though her boy was as healthy a child as ever I saw and has grown into a fine lad. This girl you have carried off and won from Peirithoos is a jewel. And, while she is a very child, she is precocious, too, and thoughtful beyond her years. She startles me with the wisdom she utters amid her babyish prattle. She will chatter away like any child and then something will cross her mind and she will become sedate, almost grave, and talk weightily, like a grown woman. She is certain to grow up wise. And I love her name. I love to call her 'Helen.' "

"I am pleased," Theseus grunted. "Let us have her with us in the banqueting hall this evening. Have a general feast for the entire garrison, even for all the menials, to the last stable-boy. Have

the hall not too full, but well filled with my best warriors. Next the dais have a table for the councillors and another for the priests of the temples hereabouts. Send runners to invite them. Make it a great revel. For Peirithoos and I depart at dawn to-morrow, and, after he has entertained me at Pheræ, he will tell me what princess he covets and we shall set off to capture her. It may be long before I return. Have our festival worthy of my long farewell. And now I mean to sleep until it is time to bathe before dinner."

That evening the hall was filled as he had enjoined, and, on the dais at the head of the hall, was set but one table, and that with only two sofas, on one of which reclined Theseus and Peirithoos; on the other Aithre and Helen.

Helen, as became a child among her elders, as became a maiden in the presence of warriors, held her peace and kept her eyes downcast. To the unobtrusive but unremitting scrutiny of Aithre and the two chieftains she appeared so incredibly dainty and so exquisitely beautiful, so entirely and inexpressibly charming, so winsomely demure, so impeccably correct as to her manner in general and her way of eating in particular, that everything she did won from them greater and greater admiration.

After the guests had abated their hunger with generous portions of the huge roasts provided them,

when most had begun to sample the made-dishes, pasties, stews and relishes, a note or two loudly twanged hushed all talk and Iopas, hereditary bard of Aphidnæ, his long hair falling about his shoulders in delicate ringlets, his neck and fingers flashing with jewels, stood up, conspicuous in his loose robe, the fabric of which was all but hidden under particoloured embroideries. He sounded a martial air upon his gilded lyre, and, to an accompaniment of music much like that of a modern guitar, recited a cleverly versified account of the recent expedition, ending with praises of the harmonious fellowship of the two kings and of their luck, war-craft, valour and exploits, which won from the listeners cheers of approbation.

After Iopas had reseated himself, while Theseus and Peirithoos were savouring their wine, Helen whispered to Aithre. Aithre smiled.

"Son," she said, "our little princess declares that she greatly enjoyed the song of Iopas, but she adds that she would like to hear your own account of your foray."

"My dear," said Theseus, "I can drive a chariot and make plans and lead spearmen and fight battles and win victories, but I cannot tell of what I have done. Iopas has told it much better than I could."

"He is right," Peirithoos corroborated. "Men

who do things aren't good at telling of them. Fighters are seldom talkers."

Helen smiled self-confidently, discreetly, almost slyly. The ice was broken, both warriors had spoken to her directly.

"I cannot conceive," she said, slyly, yet archly, "how you two came to be cronies; you are so different, so almost incongruous. Tell me how your comradeship began?"

"Tell her, Peirithoos!" Theseus challenged.

"Why," said Peirithoos, "when father died and I became king I could see that I was not much thought of by my uncles or brothers or councillors, or, for that matter, by my soldiers or people. I thought pretty well of myself, for I had led not a few expeditions, every one successful. Also I projected several others after I became king and I succeeded in each. Yet, still, as I realised, in the talk of my capital, whatever I had done was made light of, as if all my successes were due to luck, or as if I had faced few difficulties and those trifling.

"I raged inwardly and asked my councillors, in full council, who was the most redoubtable adversary alive. All named Theseus of Attica. I looked over my men-at-arms, called for volunteers, selected the best of the many who stood forward, and set off. I meant to prove myself by stealing the most valued herd of cattle in Attica and seeing what

would happen. Now, you tell her the rest, Theseus."

Theseus laughed.

"You are right," he said, "the rest is my story, not yours. You shall hear it, my dear.

"When news reached me that raiders had made off with my pet heifers I mustered the pick of my spearmen and set off in pursuit. The trail was plain and we overtook them between midnight and dawn, when all men are least valorous. We found them bivouacked in a grassy glade, slackening camp-fires flickering here and there and the moonlight glimmering down. I was leading my column, driving my own chariot. I saw, through the pearly haze, a tall warrior mount his chariot and urge his team towards me. A long spear-cast apart we halted. I threw the reins to my charioteer, dismounted, and took my shield and spear from my armour-bearer. He did the like at the same time. My men behind me, his behind him, drew into a crescent to watch their chiefs fight out their quarrel. Step by step, we neared each other, both wary, each crouched behind his shield, each with his eyes on the other's lance-head. We were so close that I had ceased to watch for his spear-cast, had ceased to look for a chance for mine;

we were too near to throw and must prove ourselves by lance-thrust or sword-play. I was ready to parry his lunge, watchful, alert, but wholly unable to divine his intentions, utterly at a loss to interpret either his attitude or his movements, totally puzzled.

"Then, to my amazement, he suddenly threw away his spear and shield to right and left, opened out his arms and cried:

" 'Oh, I couldn't hack a paragon like you; I love you!'

"I was so astounded that I forgot to spear him, forgot to do anything, and, before I knew what had happened, he had me round the neck! And I caught the infection. I cast away my weapons and hugged him as he hugged me. When we broke away we clasped hands. Our men cheered.

"Then we had a barbecue of the least perfect of my kine and stuffed ourselves with crisp, juicy beef. Then we slept till after noon."

"And what then?" Helen queried.

"Then?" Theseus exclaimed. "Why, then we discussed all the lucrative raids we could think of and set off on the one which we judged most dangerous, just to prove our mettle."

"Tell us about it," Helen suggested.

"No, my dear," said Theseus. "The adventure proved our mettle; proved to be, in fact, so arduous that we lost more than half our men and barely got

away alive, though we succeeded. Such butchers' work is no fit subject for table-talk."

"Thank you!" Helen beamed at him. "I don't like horrid stories. But tell me what happened next."

Theseus laughed.

"You are greedy of stories," he said.

"All children are," the little princess replied, "and they tell me I am only a child yet. Tell me the next story."

Theseus laughed again.

"The next story," he said, "would be a wedding-story. As we had proved our mettle to our own satisfaction and that of our men-at-arms, councillors and subjects, we thought ourselves fit to marry. Peirithoos won the cast and I helped him to induce King Adrastus of Argos to give him his daughter, Hippodamia, one of the greatest heiresses and loveliest maidens alive. After the wedding celebration at Argos I was one of the princes who accompanied the bride and groom to Pheræ to participate in the festivities of their infare.

"It had seemed to me that Peirithoos found matrimony tame and safety pall on him after the hazards of roving; he had seemed less lively from day to day after his wedding. At the infare he appeared manifestly glum and bored. We had lain down to dinner early, before sunset, and, from my sofa on

the dais at the head of the hall I could see at once all its magnificence of painted columns, gilded capitals and ceiling-beams, silver lamps hanging by silver chains, silver mixing-bowls, chased golden goblets, polished tables, crimson sofa cushions, tessellated floor, gilt-bronze door-posts, and through the doorway the evening sunshine on the luxuriant valley, wooded hills beyond and many-tinted mountain-peaks against the blue sky.

"Peirithoos saw all that as I saw it and had beside him one of the most beautiful women on earth as queen and wife and knew of the chests of treasure he had brought home as her dowry, yet he did not seem joyous, rather dejected and gloomy. He appeared rather drowsy with ennui, utterly uninterested in the music, the singing, the cheers.

"But when the last sun rays had faded from the mountain-peaks and twilight was waning, after the lamps had been lighted, as the great shaggy Bull-goaders of the forests, bidden as guests with the mountaineers and other chiefs of the uplands, became noisy over their wine, became drunken and still drunker, and were manifestly growing dangerous, I saw a gleam of interest in my crony's eyes. When they lost all control of themselves, grew

openly outrageous, flouted their sofa-mates, insulted the servitors and then, in a frenzy of intoxication, made a rush to seize the bridesmaids, and their chief, Eurytion, clutched the bride herself, Peirithoos woke up.

"He snatched up the big silver salt-cellar that decorated the middle of our table and with it felled Eurytion, fairly braining him, it seemed. That started a general riot. I did my share of the fighting and saw little except my adversary's face in front of me as an opening for each blow. But I did catch a glimpse of Peirithoos, transfigured, vivacious, almost gleeful, in the thickest of the conflict. It raged all down the hall, out of the doorway, down the lawns and terraces, across the valley, up the hillsides, through the glades of the forests and lasted all that windless, cloudless, moonlit summer night and most of the next day.

"When Peirithoos and I returned together to his palace he had the air of a man who had thoroughly and genuinely enjoyed himself."

Helen's eyes had shifted again and again from Theseus to Peirithoos and back again. Now she fixed them on the latter.

"My!" she said. "I am glad that Theseus and not you won when you cast lots for me!"

"Why?" Peirithoos queried, mildly amused.

"I imagine," she said, "that Hippodamia had a

trying time of it with you. I infer that you are more of a success as a combatant than as a husband and home-maker. You sound too fond of danger. Domesticity and foolhardiness don't go together."

"He's taken plenty of foolhardy chances in his time," Peirithoos retorted. "Ask him about the wild sow Phæa, and the robbers Peripates, Siris, Sciron and Procrustes, and the Minotaur."

"Tell me yourself," said Helen, confidently.

"I wasn't there," said Peirithoos. "He killed all those and many more adversaries long before I ever saw him."

Helen uttered no word, but her gaze was fixed on Theseus and her big, melting, violet eyes were full on his. He did not keep silent long.

"The wild sow," he said, "I killed by mere force of boyish foolhardiness and either sheer luck or the immediate help of some god or gods. Of course, no man not unusually strong and quick and besides a practised spearman, could have killed a wild swine as I did then. But no skill or strength would have availed without divine favour or accidental good fortune aiding youthful recklessness. I went out without any henchman and with but four dogs. I tramped right into the little wooded swamp by Crommyon. The dogs roused the beast and she charged me, appearing as big as a bull and as swift as a stag. I dodged just enough to save my left

shin from her long tusks and as she dashed past I pierced her between the shoulder-blades, driving my spearhead clear through her into the earth with that one thrust. It was all over that quick."

"And the outlaws?" Helen prompted.

"It was plain that I must exterminate them if I was to make good my pretensions to my father's throne," Theseus continued, "but, while I talked very confidently of success, and threw out mysterious hints as to the wisdom of biding one's time, inside me I was merely scared and at fault. I went, secretly, to the nearest oracle, at a temple in a glen above Methana. I asked the god how I might overcome my antagonists and the priestess gave me the reply:

" 'No man ever was slain by a ruse
Which he partly expected;
Weapons are varied and strange;
Gold strikes the heaviest blow.'

"I meditated over this utterance of the god. In the treasury of Troezene were nuggets of gold and of silver and lumps of lead, some rough, some smooth, as they had been worn by the water of the streams in whose beds they had been found, or as they had been left by the miners. There was a smooth gold nugget about the right weight for a

club-head and of just the right shape; for it was like two balls joined together by a short bar. I found a silver nugget not much larger and hammered it into a very similar shape. Then I cut a mass of lead into a chunk much like either. I had the three alike in shape and size and I hunted the forests for straight, smooth boughs of the toughest and strongest wood, suitable for handles. I selected a score, chose the three best, split them at the smaller end and lashed with wet rawhide each lump of metal into the cleft of its haft. I then explained to grandfather Pittheus what I wanted to do. He readily agreed to allow me to try my hand on the bullocks for the daily fare of his men-at-arms. For some days, instead of the bullocks having their throats cut standing, I felled each with a blow on its forehead. Day after day I saw the gold club smash deeper into the skull than did the silver or lead.

"I set off again for Attica. Peripates was, as usual, lurking in the forests of Mount Gerania and making forays on the helpless farmsteads below its foothills. I left my clothing and gear at a crofter's hut and started on my hunt for Peripates, bareheaded, barefoot, naked save for a scanty loin-cloth, and empty-handed except for my insignificant-looking gold-headed club.

"Peripates, naturally, took me for some runaway

malefactor who had somehow escaped being stoned to death.

" 'Bub,' he grinned, 'what you been up to?'

" 'Too much, it seems,' I rejoined.

" 'What you been doin' with that club?' he jeered.

" 'Nothin' much,' said I. 'I made it to keep up my courage by having something like a weapon in my hands. And I thought it might help with any wolf or bear I couldn't elude.'

" 'Good lad,' said he, 'let's look at it.'

"As he put out his hand to it I jumped like a grasshopper and cracked him over the head. His great bullet skull smashed like an eggshell."

Theseus paused.

"And Sciron?" Helen breathed.

"I never touched Sciron," Theseus pursued. "I thought he might have heard of how I had disposed of Peripates. I started along the seaside cliff-road from Crommyon to Megara pondering the first line of the oracle. I had heard that he generally managed to get between the cliff and his adversary and push him off the road on to the crags beneath. When I met him I manœuvred for position and I took care to act as if I were trying to get between him and the rock-wall out of which the road was cut. When

he thought he saw his chance and leapt at me I dodged and he went over the cliff and crashed on the rocks below."

"And Siris?" Helen pressed him.

"I despatched both Siris and Procrustes as I had finished Peripates," said Theseus. "And the Minotaur too. An all but naked lad, with a trifling forked stick in one hand, looked so despicable that I had each one dead before he anticipated any attack."

"What was the Minotaur like?" Helen queried.

"Ah, my dear," said Theseus, "that is what I have never told any one and have no intention of telling you. He wasn't any bull nor any man nor a man with a bull's head, nor a bull with a man's torso, arms and head where his neck ought to have been, as folks tell. But he was a monster sufficiently portentous, abnormal, formidable and alarming to satisfy the most adventurous youth."

"Did he really eat human flesh?" Helen questioned.

"As to what he ate, my dear," said Theseus, "whether man's food or beast's food, I shall say nothing. But he ate no human flesh. The youths and maidens of our yearly tribute were for the Minotaur in the sense that they were, one each new moon, sacrificed before him. He was, among the Cretans, regarded as a sort of good-luck god, and, for some reason, it was held more propitiatory to

perform the sacrifices before the Minotaur than before the statue of the god he represented."

"Did the Minotaur lurk in the centre of a labyrinth?" Helen asked.

"All these rumours of mazes and of intricate windings of tortuous passages," said Theseus, "are mere garbled reports of the vastness and complication of the Cretan palaces. It is impossible, without seeing them, for any one to realise what they are like. To say that each is a building larger than a town, with more rooms than one of our towns has houses, and more corridors than a town has streets, does not convey any idea of them. All Aphidnæ could be set down in the main courtyard of any one of a score of the palaces of Crete and leave plenty of room unoccupied."

"Tell me about Crete," Helen beamed.

"If I do," Theseus laughed, "you'll think me a liar. The glories of Crete are so incredible that what we hear of them has given rise to the proverb that all Cretans are liars. But I'll risk your incredulity for the sake of enjoying your amazement. Crete is one vast pleasance. The mountains are wooded to their summits, except three or four of the highest. The vast forests of pine and fir on the upper slopes and of oak, beech, chestnut and other such trees on the lower slopes furnish abundant timber. The pasturage is rich and the flocks

of goats and sheep and herds of cattle and horses are uncountable. All the lowlands are cultivated and bewilder one with their luxuriance of fruit-trees, vines, shrubberies and crop-lands. Everywhere one sees swarms of healthy, merry people, well-fed, well-clad, well-housed. Their buildings are amazing, not merely the hundreds of titanic palaces which house the nobles, but the thousands upon thousands of the dwellings of the populace. All are of stone, with beams of oak and panels of cedar. We think ourselves very fine with our window-shutters to keep out the snow and rain and our lattices to keep out crows and pigeons; but the Cretans have in their windows in place of our wooden lattices screens of bronze bars with the intervals filled in with bits of coloured glass from Egypt, letting in the light and keeping out flies and even gnats along with sparrows and larger birds and fog as well as rain. We are proud of the tanks in our courtyards where we collect rain-water, but in Crete every dwelling, even the meanest, has flowing water led in through tubes of glazed pottery, so that everybody may bathe daily, even through the longest drouth, for the water comes from lakes in the gorges of the mountains or in the hollows of the hills, and from their baths it is led off through larger tubes of pottery-ware. I could talk all night of the ease, the comfort, the convenience, the

amenity, the luxury of life in Crete, even for the poorest Cretans.

"But, most amazing of all to us, is the peacefulness and order of the island. You'll think I am not only the biggest liar you ever met, or heard of, but the silliest fool alive to tell a lie which I know couldn't possibly find credence. But I am telling the mere truth when I say that in all Crete there is no fortified city, town or castle, or any trace of there ever having been any such structure as a city wall, town wall, fortress, fort, towered gateway, castle, tower or what not. The vast palaces of the king, and of his princes and nobles, lie open all around, without any enclosure, not only not any battlemented outer wall, but without any earthwork, ditch or stockade. The cities lie as open, no towers flanking their harbour-entrances, no encircling walls to landwards. So of all their towns, each lies open. No guardsmen patrol any marketplace by day, no watchmen stand guard at night. Their granaries are not set high on hills, but by their farmsteads, each unfenced as are their cattle-byres and sheep-folds and styes and fowl-roosts and dove-cotes. There is in all Crete not only no outlaw, no robber, but no thief. No one steals, no one fears robbery or theft. Therefore there is no need for walls and gates and towers against violence

or for fences and bars and bolts against stealth, or for weapons.

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"Except in the hands of the seamen on the king's warships and in the hands of his men-at-arms and guards, I saw no weapon of any kind carried or worn by any Cretan. Among themselves Cretans never fight, never quarrel. Boxing is one of their favourite sports and all practise it from boyhood, but I never saw a Cretan strike another in anger, saw no scuffling among lads or boys. I am told that the king's guards are only for show and as an institution handed down from antiquity. It has been hundreds of years, they tell me, since any insurrection, riot or brawl disturbed the comity of the island. The men-at-arms drill only for fighting overseas, as do the crews of the king's numerous navy. Life in Crete is one long series of dances and banquets. The people sleep long at night, eat to satiety, wear clothing not only comfortable, but beautiful, and, while they work energetically at fishing and tree-felling, at herding and husbandry, at joiners'-work and smithy-work, they have much leisure for idling and revelling."

Helen drew in her breath as Theseus paused.

"Is it true," she said, "that the King's daughter Ariadne helped you to slay the Minotaur?"

"My dear," said Theseus, "no man living is my superior at the use of any kind of weapon, no man is more crafty, more wary, more alert, more agile than I. No man is more patient to watch for his chance, quicker to see it, swifter to take advantage of it; but, had I had only my own prowess to aid me, I should have died in Crete on the altar before the Minotaur. I am alive because of the favour of a kind-hearted princess. I shall never cease to be grateful to her, to treasure my memories of her, to revere and bless her."

"Then, is it true," Helen queried, "that she left her home and parents and eloped with you on the sea and that you deserted her and left her abandoned on Naxos?"

Aithre, shocked at the child's precocious forwardness, moved as if to check her. Theseus motioned his mother not to interfere.

"That slander on me," he said, calmly, "has been broadcast over all our world. It has a solid core of substantial fact; but the tone of the tale is a sorry libel. To begin with, Ariadne was no maiden, but a widow. Her husband had been one of her cousins, an admiral of the King's fleet. He had fallen in a sea-fight with the Tyrians, and her only child had not long survived his father. Ariadne

had immersed herself in grief and had refused to remarry. Her father had indulged her and she had had a palace and a retinue all to herself. She told me, over and over, that I was the handsomest human being she had ever set eyes on. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that she felt an intense interest in me from the day I first saw her. Put yourself in my place, a lad who, after some creditable exploits, when just qualified and accepted as heir to a kingdom, found himself chosen by lot as a sacrificial victim, with the certainty of dying on the altar unless he saved himself by some inconceivable combination of valour, daring, strength, skill, quickness, craft and luck. When I found that I, a prisoner and in chains, had won the favour of a beautiful and exquisitely attired princess, I was all but delirious with relief. By her aid I abolished the monster, by her aid I escaped. Can you wonder that I was as certain that I loved her as she that she loved me? She certainly appeared to me to be violently enamoured of me; I certainly felt not only violently enamoured of her, but sure that I was hers for life. When we cast off our hawsers and my men cautiously pulled the first short strokes of their muffled oars, I thought I was escaping with my queen to live with her a long life at Athens.

"The several occasions on which we had spent together a few breathless hours of precarious ecstasy

had not revealed us to each other. She, I conceive, had noted in me nothing except that I was big, strong, lithe, graceful, comely and jaunty. I am sure that I had noted in her only that she was not merely beautiful and fascinating, but also queenly and gracious. Neither of us doubted that our blissful raptures would last out our lives.

"Before we had reached Naxos we were not only disillusioned and bored with each other, but bitterly regretful. I was raging at myself as an ingrate, already aching to be rid of a princess to whom I owed my life. She was equally disgusted at having, as she bluntly said to me, been silly enough to become infatuated, just because he was handsome, with an unlicked cub of a boorish savage. She was aghast at my manner of eating, from our first meal together; before we had sighted Naxos she was sneering, almost railing, at me for the inelegance of my behaviour, judged by Cretan standards. I was equally dismayed at the prospect of her disdain of conditions of life as she would find them at Aphidnæ, or at Athens. She had brought with her her maid, her hair-dresser, her masseuse, her bath-attendant, her wardrobe woman, and others to the number of ten female slaves. She bemoaned the numerous retinue she had had to leave behind.

"At Naxos we had a talk, entirely friendly and surprisingly frank. Both of us had enjoyed our

transports. Both knew that our infatuation was a thing of the past. She was inclined to thank me for a rapturous experience. I was unaffectedly grateful to her for taking an interest in me and saving me. We agreed that we were each weary of the other. It was plain that we could not long elude the hundreds of swift warships of her father's navy scouring the seas for her. If one found her without me she would be treated with every consideration and conveyed back to her much-regretted palace, to her wide vistas over the island and the sea, her park, orchards, gardens, terraces, colonnades, pools, vapour baths, servitors, banquets, her litter and all her beloved luxuries. I could slip away northwards past Myconos and Tenos and watch for a chance to escape homewards round Andros. We parted like an indulged scapegrace nephew from a doting aunt."

"It seems to me," said Helen, slyly, "that you men who perform exploits can sometimes come pretty near to telling of them."

Peirithoos guffawed and joyously dug Theseus in the ribs.

"Didn't I tell you he had been as rash and foolhardy as ever I had?" he demanded, grinning at Helen like a big brother.

"You two are very different in your venturesomeness," Helen replied, sedately. "I judge that if

Theseus thought it his duty he would face any danger unflinchingly. You impress me as loving danger for its own sake, not for anything you may hope to gain by facing it."

"Just what mother used to say to me!" cried Peirithoos, slapping his thigh.

Aithre, glancing about the banquet hall, whispered to Theseus. He gave the signal for the close of the celebration and the dispersal of the company.

The very next morning Theseus and Peirithoos drove out of Aphidnæ in their chariots leading a long column of spearmen. They moved off northwards.

The moon waxed and waned and waxed and waned: each day and each night was much like the other days and nights since Aphidnæ was left with barely its minimum garrison. Aithre had the greatest confidence in Nicasion, whom Theseus had put in charge of the fortress. And she was glad of her confidence in him, for she found herself impatient of the time she must consume each day in going the rounds and approving the location of the sentinels, the arrangements for reliefs, and such other matters, vital to the safeguarding of the fortress in the absence of its lord. Also her supervision of her slave-girls and of their spinning, weaving and cookery was no longer a daily joy to be relished and

lingered over, but a task to be done with as soon as her conscientious nature would allow.

Aithre grudged every moment of the day spent out of sight of Helen. Being with Helen, gazing at her, watching her graceful postures and movements and the varying expressions of her lovely, intelligent, sympathetic face, bathing her, tending her, waiting on her—these became the chief interests of life for Aithre.

So passed many days.

One hot, moonless night they were seated on the flat roof of one of the gateway towers. They had been talking of the stars, Helen asking questions and Aithre telling her the names of the brightest and the myths current concerning the most conspicuous constellations.

They had fallen silent.

Aithre listened.

"Strange," she said, "I seem to hear horse-hoofs on the road from Acharnæ, but I do not hear any sound of chariot-wheels."

"Naturally," spoke Helen, with a sort of chuckle. "Those horses are galloping free, they are not yoked to a chariot."

"What on earth makes you say so strange a thing, child?" Aithre exclaimed. "Listen! Those are not the hoof-beats of loose horses galloping at random. They keep the road and are steadily and

evenly nearing us. They must be guided. Yet I hear no screech of the chariot-wheels."

"Naturally," Helen repeated. "They are galloping free, as I told you."

"What on earth, child," Aithre rejoined, "makes you so sure of so strange a statement?"

"Those horses," said Helen, "are carrying my brothers, Castor and Pollux. They never drive horses from chariots. They sit on the horses' backs, their legs hanging down on either side, guiding their horses with short reins. The horses submit and carry them where they please, as swift as a wind."

"Child!" Aithre exclaimed. "You should not utter, as if serious, such wild imaginings. Where do you get such fantastic ideas! Why, you might as well talk of your brothers bestriding lions and riding them. It is hard enough to break a team of mares to pull a chariot. No man ever bestrode a horse and lived."

"My brothers," spoke Helen, "bestride horses and live. And they are now nearing Aphidnæ on horseback. They must have a strong force of men-at-arms with them or behind them. They are coming to take me home. They ride horseback and live.

But there are some men in Aphidnæ now who will not live till dawn."

Aithre, startled, too startled to rebuke the child, hurried off to warn Nicasion and rouse the whole garrison. She led Helen with her to their apartments.

The attack was soon delivered and soon over. In the pitch dark a band of resolute Spartans battered at the main gate and the Messenian archers shot volleys of arrows at the tops of the towers. While the garrison was intent on driving off these assailants, Castor and Pollux, with a chosen few, scaled the wall on the seaward side of the fortress, killed the guards of a postern, opened it, and, before the garrison could realise what was happening, had overwhelmed them with the spearmen who poured in in their rear.

Soon after dawn the last fighting was over, and the sons of Tyndarus, unscratched, were masters of Aphidnæ.

As soon as it was light enough to see they began a systematic search for booty and gathered their loot into the main courtyard. When they had made up their minds that they had all that was really worth taking away, in particular all that Theseus had carried off from Sparta when he captured Helen, the elated brothers began to marshal their band for de-

parture, for they were too crafty as leaders to linger a moment longer than could be helped. Helen and Aithre waited in the litter.

When they had shouted that they would break down the door unless it was opened, Aithre, calm and self-contained, had set wide the door of the women's quarters for them and they had entered without bloodshed or damage.

Castor's first words to Helen had been:

"Sister, have you been well-treated or ill-treated?"

"You and Pollux," she had replied, "could not have been more sedulously considerate than was Theseus from the moment he captured me; not even our own dear mother, if she were still alive, could have shown more tenderness and affection for me than has Aithre."

"Then," Castor had said, "we will spare her life. We had meant to cut her throat."

And they had conducted them both down to the courtyard and to the litter ready waiting.

When everything and every man was ready to start and they had but to give the word, the two brothers approached Helen.

"Sister," said Castor, "have you any request to make before we set off?"

"Yes," said Helen, promptly. "Aithre, as I told

you, has been as loving to me as if she were indeed my own blood mother. I ask you to set her free."

The two brothers started and gazed at each other.

"Since you ask it," said Castor, "you shall have your wish. Aithre, you are free to go where you choose."

"I choose," said Aithre, without an instant's hesitation, "to go wherever Helen goes. Above all things I desire never to be separated from her as long as we two live."

Helen chuckled and put out a delicate little hand to Aithre.

"I knew," she said, "what your choice would be. But I wanted to hear you choose. Now I shall never doubt."

"Have your choice," said Castor, "but understand what choice you are making. If you remain here you remain dowager queen of Attica, mistress of Aphidnæ, for we have burnt nothing and slain no more men than we had to slay to gain mastery of the fortress. If you remain, you remain what you have been. If you come with us you come not as a queen, but as a captive, not as a free woman, but as Helen's bond-slave for life, till the last breath you draw."

"I shall not remain here of my own free will,"

said Aithre. "Of my own free will I desire to go with Helen, even if I am to be her bond-slave. I desire only to be with Helen."

Helen chuckled.

"I knew," she said again, "what your choice would be. But I wanted to hear you choose. Now I shall never doubt."

II: GYTHEON

II: GYTHEON

"STEADY! Steady!" Tyndarus warned. "Easy, now! Set me down carefully! If you jar me as you did yesterday I'll have every man-jack of you varlets lashed until he howls! I'll have you flogged till it will take you until next moon before you can move without groaning as you make me groan, you heedless fools! Set me down easy!"

His eight bearers needed no admonitions to make them cautious about jarring the testy old king. He was, manifestly, so racked with pain that any jolt agonised him. Anyhow, whether in pain or not, he had grown so peevish and irascible that all his attendants dreaded him. They lowered their burden inch by inch, deftly grounded the feet of his chair-legs on the terrace-pavement without any joggling and slid out of their sockets the long carrying-poles so softly that not even their captious lord felt their withdrawal.

Like many another aging king of Laconia before and after him, Tyndarus found Gytheon a more comfortable and agreeable residence than Sparta, his

capital. It was farther south and enjoyed, therefore, a reputation for having a milder climate. It was on the sea and not only more breezy on hot afternoons, but less often very hot or very cold. It was the strongest fortress in Laconia and so needed but a small garrison and took up less of its master's time with inspections and other details of the maintenance of its preparations for defence. It had fine views over sea and land.

Now, as his bearers tiptoed off, he swept his glance across the wide prospect visible from the terrace, relishing the brilliance of the morning sunshine on the blue water and the varied tints of rock, soil and crop-land. As was customary his chair had been placed to the right of Aithre's. She, Helen and Penelope, who had stood up as his retinue debouched on the terrace, now reseated themselves, and, according to court etiquette, waited for him to speak.

"Well," he wheezed, "the day has come, and nobody is here yet. I'm regretful that I named the day at all. I am not by any means complimented, in fact I feel downright affronted, that no one came before the day announced."

"Tyndarus," Aithre smiled, "you are entirely too carping and fretful. Considering that you stipulated rigidly that any suitor for Helen who arrived here before to-day would be treated as having vol-

untarily withdrawn from the competition, you should feel that, no matter how eager the suitors may be, every one of them would be careful not to contravene any of your conditions, especially that about not attempting to steal a march on the others."

Tyndarus grunted, twitching at his cloak, to wrap it closer about him. His feet were cased in shoes of soft crimson leather, his robe of white wool had a crimson border, and his ample cloak, which enveloped him from neck to heels, was all of the same deep crimson, that costly Tyrian dye most admired of all known tints and rated as the proper hue for the habiliments of kings. His attire was kingly and swathed a big-boned frame once kingly in every contour, but now emaciated and shrunken. Of his wrinkled and wizened face only the hard, glittering eyes had anything royal; and the broad-brimmed, flapping-edged, low-crowned black felt hat jammed tight on his head, which shaded his eyes, was most unkingly. He was an ailing old man who had once been all a king and was, but merely nominally, a king yet. He settled himself in his armchair, inside his wrappings.

"At least," he said, "some of the ardent aspirants might have been sufficiently fervent to reach here at sunrise."

"You'd find fault with anything, Tyndarus,"

Aithre laughed, "when you are in a bad humour. And you seem in a very bad humour to-day. Do not forget that two runners came in at dawn; one from Sparta, bringing you a statement as to how many parties had arrived there up to dusk yesterday; the other from Croceæ, advising you that the most impetuous of the younger suitors had pushed forward that near us yesterday and had camped there for the night, meaning to set out at dawn to-day and reach here early. I think the foremost is approaching now; I seem to see something on the road from Croceæ."

"I see two chariots and a line of pack-mules; yes, and another chariot behind the pack-train," said Helen, from where she sat on the other side of Aithre, between her and Penelope.

"Oh! young eyes, young eyes!" grumbled Tyndarus.

"We must be ready to receive them," said Aithre.

Tyndarus beckoned and reiterated his instructions concerning the quartering of his numerous guests, admonishing his seneschal that no mistakes must be made as to the relative importance or unimportance of the expected visitors. Behind him, Aithre, Helen and Penelope, the terrace was lined with guards and with liveried menials, while close about them clus-

tered cup-bearers, carriers of pitchers, jugs, ewers and basins, fan-wavers, sunshade-bearers, pages, runners, maids-of-honour and other members of their immediate retinue.

To the astonishment of the seated four the first of the arrivals to be ushered up the steps of the terrace was an elderly man, every inch a king, but manifestly, though at a distance, no longer young or even middle-aged. When he was half way up the steps both Tyndarus and Aithre recognised Nestor, king of Pylos.

Tyndarus snorted.

"Here's a specimen of those young and impetuous suitors you spoke of just now, Aithre."

"Antilochus," Aithre said, serenely, "is just behind his father. He is among the youngest of the suitors we know of and he may well be as impetuous as any."

Tyndarus put out his hand to Nestor.

"Old friend," he said, "I cannot rise to greet you any more than if I were a corpse. I can talk as much as ever, maybe more; I am not altogether unable to see and hear; and I can eat and drink, a very little. But as far as walking goes, or even standing, I might just as well be dead. I'm not buried yet, but I'm less a man than a corpse."

"A very lively corpse!" Nestor laughed. He was a tall, broad-shouldered, pleasant-faced man, neither

stout nor spare, walking springily, holding himself erect and with only a few grey hairs amid his abundant brown locks. He presented Antilochus, a handsome, slender lad, glanced keenly at Helen and Penelope and greeted Aithre warmly as a friend in days long past.

The three wore gowns of sheer white wool, edged with ornamental parti-coloured borders. Linen coifs half hid, half revealed their elaborately dressed hair, set off also by gauzy white veils, which the two girls wore coquettishly. All three had thrown off their crimson cloaks, which draped the backs of their armchairs. Aithre looked very placid and composed; Helen brilliantly beautiful; Penelope cold, austere, almost severe, her chiselled profile expressionless.

Close behind Nestor and Antilochus came Sthenelus of Argos, well-knit, swarthy, his face scarred with two sword-cuts. After him appeared Menelaus of Tiryns, tall, graceful, yellow-haired, blue-eyed, good-looking, but with no conspicuous feature and with little expression in his immobile, handsome face. Behind him strode Agapenor of Arcadia, burly and bluff, as was natural for a son of huge, gruff Ancæus. He was followed by Teucer of Salamis, Telamon's younger son, looking small after Agapenor and before his elder brother Ajax, tallest of all the suitors, not uncomely, and certainly good-

natured, but with no intelligence looking out of his grey eyes.

Tyndarus chirped and squeaked at them, courteous enough in the wording of his greetings, but with always a hint of mockery.

All that day, at intervals, cortège after cortège arrived at Gytheon and the master of each had to be greeted and assigned quarters. Before sunset, besides many lesser men from Peloponnesus and central Greece, Tyndarus had greeted Ulysses, son of Lærtes, of Ithaca, a wiry young man with very black and very curly hair; Podalirius and Machaon of Bœotia, famous as sons of Æsculapius and already rivalling their father as accredited surgeons. Podalirius, tall and lean, Machaon, the smallest of the suitors, very dapper and spruce, wearing three large rings; Diomede, son of Tydeus, King of Ætolia, a magnificent warrior, blond and curly-headed and blue-eyed as Menelaus, but with a sort of dash in his manner which was very taking; and, imposing great self-control on Aithre, as reigning in the former kingdom of her vanished son, Mnestheus, King of Attica. This was the only cloud on her horizon.

Next day the arrivals were mostly from Thessaly, each with a similar tale of

being delayed beyond any possible expectation by bad roads, difficult passes and other obstacles. On the third day there came in still more Thessalians and some suitors from overseas, their voyages longer than they had anticipated. Among the more conspicuous and acclaimed of these were Protesilaus of Thessaly, hardly more than a lad and with quick movements very unlike the dignified self-restraint of most kings; Philoctetes, son of Pæon, of Melibœa, in Thessaly, a dour, sullen, leaden-faced youth; Patroclus, son of Menœtius, from Opus in Locris, a lad with a singularly prepossessing demeanour; Eumelus, son of Admetus, now reigning at Pheræ in Thessaly in room of Peirithoos, a serene, sedate young man; Ajax, the son of Oileus, of Narycia in Locris, a dandified spark, not so small as Machaon, but smaller than Teucer; and Idomeneus and Meriones, conquerors and kings of Crete; Meriones, youthful and visibly exultant; Idomeneus, a widower and no longer young, tanned by sun and wind, very self-contained, yet with a hint of inward elation.

Polypœtes, son of Peirithoos, after exchanging ceremonial greetings with Tyndarus, had a long talk with Aithre.

"No," he said, "there is no enmity whatever between me and Eumelus. You see, father had made no arrangements for a prolonged absence, had ap-

pointed no regent, had left everything to the council. They had no difficulty in managing the government and, for more than a year, had only minor anxieties. Then, when some of our wilder highland neighbours threatened raids and even war, they debated their situation and were unanimous that I was too young to be king or to be hailed as chieftain under any title. They elected Eumelus, as his father had been king before mine, and I had to acquiesce and withdraw. I have been living with Peleus at Larissa.

"No, nothing whatever has been heard of Theseus or of my father since they marched off northwards on their undeclared quest. You know father's reputation for being able to march even a large force through a strange country so craftily as not only to rouse no opposition, to stir up no pursuit, but so as to pass through and on without any one suspecting his passage. He must have surpassed himself on that last expedition, for, although the council sent off embassies all over Epirus and Macedonia, nowhere was any trace of his passage discoverable. No one claimed to have seen such an expedition or to have heard of it. Not one man of all the charioteers and spearmen has ever been heard of anywhere. The whole force vanished totally, with its leaders, as completely as if it had gone down into the earth. No one can conjecture which way they went, what was their objective or what happened to them."

When runners notified Tyndarus that the roads to northwards, to the frontiers of his dominions, showed no more distinguished strangers approaching, and his lookouts descried no strange sails to seawards, he convened the suitors in the stadium outside his palace, and made them a speech, which those nearest him heard sufficiently well to spread the knowledge of all he had said among all who were intended to hear it.

Wheezing, and often pausing for breath, he said:

"More than a year ago I sent embassies through all Hellas and even beyond Hellas, notifying all persons who aspired or might aspire to woo my younger daughter that no suitor nor any embassy from any suitor would be received by me before sunrise on her eighteenth birthday, and that any suitor who annoyed me with any embassy or visit before that hour would be rated as having advertised to all men that he desired to be regarded as no longer a suitor for Helen. You have now assembled at the time stipulated. The day, as you have noticed, happens to coincide with the half-moon of this month. You will remain here as my guests until the next half-moon. On the day after the next half-moon my daughter will signify to me her choice among you, I will announce it to you, and she and the man of her choice among you will be immediately married. Until the next half-moon

you will woo her by displaying daily, here in my stadium, your prowess as charioteers, spear-throwers, archers, boxers, wrestlers, as competitors at throwing the discus, in foot-races, at the high-jump and the broad-jump and at other athletic contests. You will also, in the courtyards of the palace, compete in ball-games and in its banquet-hall you will display your skill at lyre-playing, dancing and singing. Above all she and I will observe your appearance of health, intelligence and good-nature, how you get on with each other, which of you are most esteemed by the generality, and such like evidences of character. Self-control, cheeriness, courtesy and popularity will count high in my valuation of you, and, I fancy, in my daughter's eyes also."

Soon after the next sunrise their contests began, and continued each day thereafter, Tyndarus, Helen, Penelope and Aithre looking on from the royal pavilion of the stadium, the gallery of the palæstra or the dais of the banquet-hall. Before many days had passed Tyndarus, seated by Nestor on the terrace, where they were warming themselves in the morning sunshine, looking about to make sure that no one was within earshot, said:

"Old friend, I am regretful that I made here this

assemblage of suitors. The warriors in their suites, taken together, outnumber my garrison here ten to one. If a coterie of the suitors should band together to abduct Helen, by sudden and unforeseen action, they might easily overpower my guards and be off and away before the others could rally to overwhelm or pursue them. Young blood is hot and reckless. Many of these princes have done many deeds of venturesome daring. I am daily more and more nervous about the situation I have created."

"Don't worry!" Nestor soothed him. "Remember that your elder daughter is married to Agamemnon of Mycenæ. Whether spearmen or charioteers or galleys, he can muster more than four times as many as all the others kings of Peloponnesus collectively, you and I and the Arcadians and Argives and all. If any band of hot-heads did attempt to abduct Helen they could not get away by land, for they must pass through his dominions to reach Attica or Bœotia or Thessaly. No chieftain of the Peloponnesus would risk Agamemnon's hostility; he could crush any two or, for that matter, all of us at once. The fact that he is your son-in-law holds all these suitors overawed. His garrisons blanket their road homewards and, as you yourself told me only yesterday, he has posted a strong squadron of war-galleys at Cythera, completely com-

manding the entrance to this gulf. Set your mind at rest."

"You always could convince any man or assembly of anything you wanted believed," Tyndarus wheezed. "I'm confuted, of course, for the moment. But, however much my mind is impressed, I continue uneasy in my feelings. However, let's talk of something else."

"It happens," Nestor said, "that I want to talk of Aithre. What is her status here? I have watched and pondered, but I am unable to come to any satisfactory conclusion."

"I don't wonder," Tyndarus chirped. "She is legally a bond-woman of Helen, a slave, as a woman captured in a foray and led here into slavery. But she acts, as you have no doubt observed, as queen of Laconia and is deferred to by all my menials, men-at-arms and ministers precisely as if she were actually queen. In fact the only reason why she is not my queen is that she declined to become my queen."

"A bond-woman, a slave, a captive, resist her master's will!" Nestor exclaimed, amazed.

"Oh!" croaked Tyndarus. "I'm legally her master, but she has her way and not I mine every time our ideas clash, and it has been that way for years. To begin with Helen loves her as much as if she were her own mother, and the poor child can hardly recollect anything of her own mother, she

lost her so young. Then, manifestly, Aithre loves Helen as if she were her own daughter. Then, really, Aithre has been a princess all her life and a queen most of it. She queens it over me. When I proposed to set her free and make her my queen she ridiculed the suggestion; hooted at it. In fact, I'm too much of an old wreck even to pretend to marry anybody. She was right, it was preposterous and absurd for me to talk of marrying her or anybody. I let her have her way, though why she should choose to remain a bond-woman, when she might be made legally my queen and entitled to full dower-rights in all my wealth and lands, is more than I could conjecture. She nurses me as if she were my wife and queen and had always been so."

Nestor, shaking his head, remained silent.

As the days passed and they spent most of their time watching the suitors at their athletic and other competitions, Aithre found herself conning Helen and Penelope and studying their faces and conjecturing their feelings and paying almost as much attention to the reactions of her charges as to the actions of the suitors.

"Which do you like best, darling?" she asked Helen.

"I'd find it easier," Helen answered, "to say which I like least among such a gathering of the handsomest and bravest youths alive."

"Well, darling," Aithre acquiesced, "which do you like least?"

"No girl," said Helen, "would choose Agapenor for a husband; he reminds me of a bear walking on its hind legs; and Ascalaphus and Ialmon are like bulls, with their great thick necks and heavy, square jaws. But they are the only ones deficient in good looks. Of the rest I think that Menelaus and big Ajax attract me least; Ajax looks so pathetically stolid, stupider even than poor, dear Pollux was; and Menelaus is so frigidly correct, so impassively faultless."

"Very natural observations," Aithre admitted. "And now try to tell me which you like best."

"Anybody, Mother," said Helen, "man or woman, would notice Patroclus first. He is not the handsomest, but he is one of the handsomest and he has the most captivating way with him I ever saw in any man. He seems so lovable. Yet, somehow, he impresses me as more desirable for a crony or a brother than a husband. Diomede is very handsome and so is Amphilochus, who seems more like a prophet than like merely the son of a prophet. But neither of them looks like a man with a domestic nature: I fancy either would regard wife and home as all very well between campaigns, but as very secondary considerations compared with camp and combat.

"I confess, Mother, that I am most of all taken with Idomeneus and Ulysses. Their dark curly locks remind me of Theseus. I never thought of it at the time, nor in the years between then and now, but now I realise as I watch these youths that I felt, when I was at Aphidnæ, as if Theseus was already my husband and that I was entirely content with the prospect of being his wife. I admired him unreservedly, though he was old enough to be my father, and I doted on the way his hair grew round his temples. I was prepared to love him devotedly and I believe I should, if Castor and Pollux had not brought me back home and if Theseus had returned to claim me. I find that I instinctively feel my heart warm to any man who reminds me of Theseus in any way, by his build or his carriage or his expression, and, most of all, by having hair like his."

Aithre put out her hand and squeezed Helen's fingers; Helen returned the pressure.

"And which do you like best, Penelope?" Aithre queried.

"They aren't my suitors," demurely replied Penelope, with the ghost of a smile. "I don't have to approve or disapprove any of them."

"Child!" said Aithre, "it is no use to talk that way to me. I was a girl once, myself. No girl like you could consider day after day the pick of our young heroes and not feel her heart go out, in some

fashion, to more than one of them. Why be reticent with me, child?"

"I never mean to be reticent, Mother," said Penelope. "I just am. As to my heart going out to any, it certainly goes out to Thoas, a brilliant foundling, self-made among all these pedigreed patricians and feeling acutely his lack of ancient lineage. And my heart goes out to big Ajax; he looks so unalterably childlike, so gullible to his last breath, so slow-witted, so well-meaning and kind-hearted, so in need of some one to mother him."

On the very same day Tyndarus again talked with Nestor of his uneasiness.

"I like less and less," he said, "the situation in which I have put myself. It is all very well for you to assert that none of these young lords could make off with Helen past Agamemnon's war-galleys or fortresses. That is true. It is also true that they are more or less overawed by their knowledge that he is my son-in-law and will support me in every way at all times. But, no matter how much they may be overawed, young blood acts on impulse without regard to consequences. I dread some sort of outburst, some fracas, even some collective riot as bad as the conflict at the wedding feast of Peirithoos and Hippodamia, perhaps even general bloodshed approaching a massacre, when I announce which of these blades Helen finally selects and the

hot rage of disappointment blazes up in the rest. I grow more and more apprehensive as the period of probation shortens. What am I to do?"

"I wonder," said Nestor, "that you ask me or any one and cannot see for yourself."

"Old friend," said Tyndarus, meekly, "I'm years younger than you, but far more aged. My faculties fail me. I dodder. I grasp your meaning as little as would a child. Tell me."

"Why," Nestor explained, gently, "as long as each thinks that he might be the lucky man, as long as all are hopeful, all will be amenable to any reasonable and fair suggestion. Call them together and make formal proclamation, as a natural preliminary to the approaching announcement of Helen's preference, that you require them to take formal oath, with all proper ceremonials, that each will respect Helen's choice and will abide by her selection without protest or demur. That will ensure comity at the crisis."

Tyndarus at once, before the hour for the noonday rest and sleep, had the suitors assembled, stated his wishes to them, heard their unhesitating acquiescence and made arrangements for the universal oath-taking next morning. Next morning, therefore, in the great court of the palace, about its altar, following a solemn sacrifice by an impressive assemblage of venerable hierophants, the suitors, one

and all, took formal oath to abide by Helen's choice of a husband and to applaud it, acquiescing and not demurring.

As the new moon showed a thicker crescent Aithre sounded Helen to forecast her probable choice. Helen was by no means reserved.

"I am trying," she said, "to avoid choosing the youth who is just at this time most attractive to me because of some ephemeral mood of mine or some temporary charm in him. I know I shall probably be taken in by just those evanescent fascinations against which I am aiming to be on my guard, but I am studying this gathering of princes with the object of choosing for a husband not the most captivating lover nor the most enchanting bridegroom, but the man among all these who possesses those qualities which will make him such a mate that I shall never regret having chosen him, but may, to my last breath, congratulate myself on having been wise enough or lucky enough to have selected the best husband among them all."

Aithre sighed.

"Child!" she breathed, "I wish I had had a head as old as yours on shoulders as young as yours!"

"Mother," said Helen, "why did you jilt Nestor?"

"Child!" cried the queen, "how did you know?"

"Anybody with half a grain of intelligence," said Helen, "could not help knowing just by watching you two. It is as plain as if you had it written all over you that you were ardent lovers long ago in your first youth, and not merely that he loved you and you would not have him, but that you two loved each other for a long time, that you expected to be his wife and pondered on what it was going to be like as undoubtingly as I meditated over what it would be like to be wife to Theseus."

"Ah!" Aithre breathed, "if I had only been as wise as you at your age! I loved Nestor and I meant to marry him and I knew that it would be best for me, as for him. For happy as he was with Euridice and has been with Anaxibia I am sure he would have been happier with me. Certainly it would have been best for me. For Ægeus was as dissolute and worthless a scapegrace as ever captivated a wayward girl. My elopement with him brought me nothing but misery and shame and humiliation and wretchedness. Such is life, darling. I felicitate you on your good sense."

"Don't compliment me too soon, Mother," Helen laughed. "My intellect gives me good advice, but my pulses dance wildly sometimes. I may make as big a fool of myself as many a girl before me."

Aithre patted her approvingly.

Tyndarus and Nestor discoursed to very similar purport.

"The further this thing proceeds," Tyndarus gloomed, "the less I am pleased with it all. I regret my decision to leave to Helen the choice of her husband."

"You may not regret it in the end, if I read your daughter accurately," Nestor reassured him, "but I do not wonder that you regret it now. It was an amazing notion to take. I have been pondering over it and wondering what led you to think of such an unheard of idea."

"What led me?" Tyndarus snorted. "Why Helen led me! The little jade is irresistible. She can make anybody agree to anything. She could, almost from her cradle. She always has had her way, she always will be able to have her way, whatever it is. I gave in to her wheedlings and her blandishments, of course. But I don't wonder that you are amazed. I suppose no father ever before accorded to his daughter the choosing of her bridegroom. Most likely no father ever will again, to the end of time. I know I'm an old fool. There'll probably never be another parent as fond and silly as I am. But I have passed my word and I'll keep my word. Choose her own husband Helen shall and have her choice she shall, unreasonable as the idea is and against all precedent and common-sense.

I cannot break my promise to her. But I like the situation less and less.

"I have been watching the minx and she seems most attracted to the least desirable among her suitors. Like as not she'll pitch on the most undesirable of them all. I shouldn't be surprised if she selected Thoas himself."

"Why do you object to Thoas?" Nestor asked. "He is healthy and personable, brave and honourable. No man can point to any flaw in his gallantry in war or his acumen in council."

"He may be as wise as Minerva and as brave as Mars," wheezed Tyndarus, "but he'll never know who was his father, or his mother either. That's a blot on a man, no matter how brilliant his record or yet his prospects; no matter how rich or how prosperous or how puissant he may have become."

"You'll be cavilling next," laughed Nestor, "at Ialmon or Ascalaphus."

"At least," sneered Tyndarus, "they know who their mother was. And they were brought up as princes should be. You'll confute any notion I express, I know; it's your way. But girls are freakish. Sometimes there is a quirk in a girl's head which makes her do precisely the opposite not only of what is advisable, but of what she really wants. For all you or I can foretell the jade may fancy or think she fancies a coarse brute like Agapenor or a

mincing manikin like Machaon or a nobody like Meges or a nonentity like Schedius."

"You ought to know your own daughter better than I do," Nestor admitted, "but she makes quite another sort of impression on me. She is girlish enough, as lovely as a flower just opening from the bud, as gentle and sweet-natured as I should expect her mother's daughter to be; yet she seems also to have inherited some of the hard common-sense that runs in your ancestral blood. I miss my guess if she is not, as cannily as any widow, evaluating these competitors for her favour; and I equally miss my guess if she does not come pretty close to selecting the very one who will make her the most sympathetic, comprehending, indulgent and cherishing husband."

"You may be right," Tyndarus agreed, "but I shudder for fear she will choose Meriones or Idomeneus."

"What under the wide blue sky," Nestor exclaimed, "have you against Idomeneus or Meriones?"

"Just what everybody else acclaims them for," Tyndarus replied, "and that's having conquered Crete. Oh! you may stare, old friend, but it is true. I know that Crete was utterly and hopelessly ruined before either Idomeneus or Meriones set foot on the island. I know that they have been valiant

in battle and merciful in the flush of victory, in so far as victory permits mercy. I acknowledge that they have succeeded in establishing some semblance of government, some approach to the maintenance of law and order and the protection of life and property on that wretched island. In my despondency it is almost a comfort to know that the leaders of the brutal adventurers who annihilated the Cretan fleet and first invaded the island perished to a man in their contests with each other. It is to the credit of Meriones and Idomeneus, not to their discredit, that they first were able to triumph so decisively over their competitors and have made themselves masters of the island.

"But I shudder yet at the appalling ruin of Crete. Only eight years ago it was the admiration and the envy of us all and of all other foreigners who knew of it, even of Egyptians. Then, most unexpectedly, its fleet suffered a series of disasters, till the last squadron was burnt; invaders poured into Crete, its government was destroyed and the survivors of its population were enslaved by their conquerors; then the marauders fell out among themselves, and, in their internecine warfare, the palaces were gutted, the towns and cities burnt, the irrigation works demolished, reservoirs, conduits and all, the farms desolated, the very forests devastated by devouring conflagrations. Crete is all ruin. Illogi-

cally, though Idomeneus and Meriones came to Crete after its ravaging and took no part in it, yet, because they have profited most by this hideous catastrophe, I cannot abide them nor the sight of them, nor the thought of them. Don't laugh at me, don't scold me, I can't help it. I loathe them.

"Old friend, the wreck of Crete has unmanned me. Bad as things have been in Peloponnesus and all Greece and Thessaly ever since you and I were boys: wars everywhere, everywhere mighty fortresses and stately towered cities proving by no means impregnable, always battles and massacres, treacheries and revenges, pillaging and outlawry; fierce and bloody and violent as life has been with us, we could always point to Crete and hope that we might eradicate outlawry, eliminate violence, settle difficulties by discussion and reason and become, in time, like Crete. Now Crete has become like Hellas or worse.

"I must die soon, for I cannot live long now, but I want to die with some solid foundation for a reasonable hope that my pearl of a daughter will live out her life in peace and happiness. Three times she has been abducted from Sparta, three times rescued and brought back by her brothers; the third time before she was fourteen years old. My two sons are dead and she is more beautiful than ever. The probabilities are that some of these present suitors or some other mad-cap will sooner or

later attempt to carry her off from her husband, when she has one. I want to devise some plan by which that possibility may be forestalled. I want her to be safe and comfortable for life. I can think of no adequate contrivance, can you?"

Nestor sat long in silence looking out to sea.

"No," he said, "I can think of none, but I can suggest a course of action, which, I think, would give very good promise of such results as you desire."

"What is it?" Tyndarus queried.

"Sometimes," Nestor said, "the subtlest cunning lies in abstaining from craft and in being genuinely frank and open. I suggest that you call a meeting of the suitors, tell them what you have told me, without reserve, and lay the matter before them for solution. Each thinks that he may be the lucky man, each will be as anxious to keep Helen if he wins her as he is eager to win her. Each will be ready to conjecture possible advantage to himself in any plausible suggestion. No one will dare to oppose any plan which meets the approbation of the majority. Even the hot-heads will be overawed by a generally accepted proposal. More than one of these youths has already a reputation for astonishing cunning, for astuteness surpassing yours and mine at their age, and we were reckoned canny lads. One or more of them may solve the problem."

They discussed this idea for some time and Tyndarus finally accepted it.

Next morning the suitors, in response to a special invitation from Tyndarus, assembled in the stadium and saw, in the royal pavilion, Tyndarus and Nestor, seated side by side. Nestor stood up and spoke, explaining that Tyndarus had asked him to address them, since his own voice was too weak to be well heard. He then set forth briefly the old king's fears for his daughter's future, no matter what husband she might select, and his hope that some one of the suitors might solve the problem.

The suitors, unorganised and leaderless, looked at each other.

Polyxenes, the son of Agasthenes, rose and said:

"It is no wonder that the father of a daughter who was forcibly carried off three times while yet a child should fear that her future, like her past, might be marred by the reckless violence of some desperado. We have sworn to acquiesce in her choice and to disperse to our homes peaceably, leaving her in possession of her bridegroom. I am sure that all my fellow-suitors will feel that I speak for them when I say that we are all willing to support any plan likely to ensure her living out her life with her chosen mate. I cannot conceive of any such plan. If any other can, let him speak."

He sat down, and there stood up Ulysses, son of Lærtes, of Ithaca.

"I," said he, "have in mind a plan which I think would be acceptable to all of you and would promise well of attaining its object. That you may all feel me wholly disinterested in my proposal I here and now declare that I am no longer a suitor for Helen. I shall therefore derive no personal benefit from my suggestion, although I shall bind myself, with the rest of you, to its responsibilities. If you wish me to disclose what I have in mind I must first have a short private conference with King Tyndarus."

This was agreed to, after some little discussion, and, as Nestor came down, Ulysses went up into the royal pavilion, sat in Nestor's vacated chair and conferred with Tyndarus in low tones, so that no one heard anything of what they said except the old king's often-repeated:

"Say it louder! I could not hear you!" with his hand up to his ear.

Again Ulysses and Nestor changed places.

"Comrades," spoke Ulysses, "I am eager that you should accept my suggestion, for, if you do, Tyndarus has agreed that I am to have as wife his niece Penelope as my reward.

"My proposal is this: that we all pledge ourselves and take oath that if, after Helen has selected a

bridegroom and has married him, any man whatever carries her off from her husband, we all, individually and collectively, will exert all our powers as warriors and as chieftains to punish her abductor and to restore her to her lawful husband.

"Before you vote on my proposal, please notice that Helen's only sister, Clytemnestra, is the wife and queen of Agamemnon of Mycenæ, king of the North Coast, the lord of the most extensive and populous realm in Hellas, the master of the most numerous army and navy in our part of the world, the richest and most puissant king among us all. He, as Helen's brother-in-law, would be certain, if she should be abducted, to put forth all his powers for her rescue. So, if you take oath to carry out my proposal, you will be pledging yourselves merely to aid Agamemnon. I conceive that my suggestion will meet with your approval."

It did. The discussion was mostly a succession of speeches lauding the idea.

The next day there was a gathering of hierophants, a procession, a solemn sacrifice of a bull, a ram and a boar, the blood gushing from whose slit throats was caught in the hollow of a circular

bronze war-shield. Into this crimson pool each suitor dipped his sword-point and as the drops trickled from it, took oath:

"If any man carry off Helen, daughter of Tyndarus, from whatever man of us she may choose as husband, with all my strength, valour, and power, I will join in punishing the abductor and in restoring Helen to her lawful husband. If I fail, in word or deed, then may my blood and the blood of my parents, wife, children and all my dear ones drip on the earth as now drops of this blood of sacrifice drip from the point of my sword. May all the gods, who accept this sacrifice and look down upon my oath, wreak upon me and mine such vengeance if I fail in deed or word."

All swore in this form, aloud.

The following day was the last day of their competitive displays and each man surpassed himself as an athlete, as a dancer, as a musician, or in whatever way he excelled.

The next day Helen chose as husband Menelaus of Tiryns. At once Tyndarus announced her choice. Without any sign of resentment, though many of disappointment, the suitors acclaimed her choice. And that very afternoon was solemnised not only her wedding to Menelaus, but Penelope's to Ulysses. After which the day closed with a magnificent banquet, of which all partook.

To Menelaus Tyndarus said:

"I am pleased that my girl selected you. You are among the best-balanced of all her suitors. And, with my two girls married to two brothers, I feel safer.

"But you must not so much as suggest returning to Tiryns. Send for your personal effects and your valued servitors. But abide here. To-morrow I shall proclaim you King of Sparta. With my two splendid sons both dead and I not far from death, being a king is too much for my strength. To-morrow you shall be King of Sparta and all Laconia."

III: KRANÆ

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AITHRE and Helen were seated side by side in their arm-chairs in the mellow sunshine on the upper terrace at Gytheon. Hermione, a singularly beautiful child between four and five years old, was playing with some toys beside her mother's chair. Along the rear wall of the terrace squatted in the sun the child's nurse, Helen's maid, Aithre's maid, their sunshade-bearers, two errand girls, two pages, two errand boys, a sweeper, and some others of their attendants. On the lower terraces, with many servitors idling about, were Menelaus and a bevy of his young noblemen, most of them idling onlookers; three, along with the king, engaged in that ancient game of ball from which are derived all of that numerous family of related modern ball-games which includes tennis, lawn-tennis, rackets, hand-ball, squash, pallone and pelota. Menelaus, as usual, was winning, not because his adversaries judged it politic to allow the king to win, but because he was really so much the best ball-player in Laconia that he outclassed all opponents and could find no man able to face him

on equal terms and few competent to put up an interesting game against any team of which he was one.

Helen was dividing her attention between her embroidery, her child at play beside her, her handsome husband achieving marvellous strokes and winning where any other player would have lost, and Aithre next her. As both embroidered and kept glancing at the ball-players and the child, they also chatted.

"Often and often," said Aithre, "I wish I had been as canny as you, Helen, and had married Nestor, instead of eloping with Ægeus. You had no silly impulses or were too sensible to be swept away by them. Judging from what we hear of your former suitors, you certainly selected for a husband the flower of them all. You were wise beyond your years."

"Sometimes," Helen rejoined, "I do plume myself on my wisdom; sometimes I think I deserve no credit; it merely happened that no seductive scapegrace as irresistible to me as Ægeus was to you was among my suitors assembled here, and I chose well by mere luck and force of circumstances. I sincerely hope that no man as fascinating to me as was Ægeus to you will ever come near me. I might prove to be less wise than you think me."

"What on earth," Aithre half whispered, "made you say that, darling?"

"You made me say it, Mother," Helen replied. "You keep recurring to your regrets for your unfortunate elopement and to your wistful recollections of Nestor as a lover and once your possible future husband. You keep comparing him to Menelaus. That sets me to thinking."

"Aren't you happy with Menelaus, darling?" Aithre marvelled.

"No woman," Helen replied, "could be unhappy with Menelaus: he is so handsome, so considerate, so gallant, so adequate, so admired by his people, so respected by his men-at-arms, so faultless."

"But—?" Aithre began.

"But," Helen took up her words, "he is almost too faultless. His unvaried perfection is almost monotonous. He is all any wife could want, except that he is never exciting or unexpected. Life with him is certainly delightful, but it is very tame."

A breathless runner bounded into sight on the lower terrace. The players paused, Menelaus heard what the messenger had to say and beckoned to his pages, of whom several raced off. One of his lackeys put the king's cloak about him and he came up onto the upper terrace.

"Dear," he said, "we must prepare to receive dis-

tinguished guests. The lookouts report three foreign war-galleys approaching from seaward side by side, and, by the signals displayed, they have aboard an important embassy. When the runner set out the ships were too far off to make out their nationality, but, by their outline, they are from far to the eastward."

Helen and Aithre stood up and all three went off to bathe and put on formal attire for a ceremonial reception.

The squadron proved to be from Troy, conveying Paris, one of the younger sons of Sultan Priam, on a tour of the western seas to visit and confer with all the kings of those regions, cement amities with allies, remove sources of irritation with neutrals, regain alienated friends, abate or abolish the antipathies of traditional foemen not at the moment hostile; and, if possible, dissipate ancient enmities.

The remainder of the day was occupied in assigning quarters to the new arrivals and in preparing for their ceremonial audience, which was postponed until next morning, as the seafarers were much exhausted from battling with head-winds and storms which they had encountered on their way from Crete.

At the audience the Asiatics made a great impression on all beholders, for they were personable men, dignified of port and stately of movement,

magnificent in their gaudy attire: shoes of soft, bright-hued leather with pointed, upcurved toes, ample trousers of brilliant silks, embroidered with leaf-patterns, girdles and poniard-belts crusted with pearls, delicate linen tunics and parti-coloured cloaks, most striking of all, turbans dazzling with jewelled aigrettes and bosses flashing with rubies and emeralds. Of them all Paris was the handsomest and the most prepossessing. He was equally engaging at dinner, adept at the difficult art of reclining on a dining-sofa without ever assuming an ungainly posture or making an awkward movement. His tact was notable and notably natural, spontaneous and artless. He was a good listener but an even better talker, and charmed them with accounts of his visits to Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Cos, Rhodes and Crete, with descriptions of Troy, with tales of the nations about the Euxine, fur-clad herdsmen who bestrode horses habitually, although they had no more heard of Castor and Pollux than those recent innovators had of them.

Next day Menelaus left Helen and Aithre at Gytheon while he and Paris set off on a tour of Laconia. They were gone some days, during which the foreign guest not only saw the sights of Sparta, reviewed his host's troops, and inspected the fortresses along the Arcadian frontier, but showed his mettle in several hunts arranged for his benefit.

When they returned Menelaus was loud in his praises of Paris as a hunter, whether stopping running wolves with his unerring arrows, bringing down stags with long and risky lance throws or spearing wild boars roused from their reedy lairs in forest swamps.

"He is a delightful companion as well as a competent hunter," said Menelaus to Helen, "and he must be no tyro at diplomacy, for, with all my skill, I can get not the faintest inkling of what he is here for. I thought at first that his aim was to arrange a permanent peace between us and the Arcadians, for there has always been a rumour of blood-brotherhood or even of actual relationship between Evander's family and the Sultans of Troy. But he does not seem to be leading up to that. I cannot make him out at all. For the present we'll pass the time in various diversions. He's as marvellous in the ball-court as at a hunt; he can hold his own with me; the first really interesting adversary I've had in years."

The next morning Helen asked Menelaus how his ball-games had gone.

"Gloriously!" he replied. "Each game is anybody's game till the last stroke. I'm better at defensive play, few men are more cautious at defence tactics than I am. But he is far my superior at every form of attack, drives hard and is perpetually

unexpected, and his play unpredictable. The longer he stays on the better I shall be pleased. I'll keep him as long as I can. I'm enjoying myself."

Within two days he came to Helen, looking vexed.

"What on earth is the matter?" she queried, for his impassive face seldom betrayed his emotions, whether pleasurable or the reverse.

"The Arcadians are out again," he said, "all along the frontier, and I must be off to hurl back, if I can, at least to check, the most general and most energetic invasion they have launched in years."

He looked annoyed.

"Just," he went on, "as I have at last found my match in the ball-court and am really enjoying myself."

"What are you going to do with him?" Helen queried.

"I can't ask him to go," said Menelaus, "and he seems to have no intention of departing. He dazed me by offering to join our expedition against Evander and his Arcadians. I exclaimed at the suggestion of an ambassador taking part in warfare. He rejoined that he had no mission to the Arcadians and was free to join in battles against them, saying that he would like to see some mountain fighting. I repeated that an ambassador must be punctiliously neutral at all times to both sides

in any conflict. He agreed gracefully. I can only leave him for you to entertain. I must be off at once. Every hour is precious."

Paris, as a guest, proved not merely easy to entertain, but no trouble at all, even very entertaining. He entered with zest into any diversion suggested. Helen wanted to see Paris lance a wild boar. The old seneschal, in charge of Gytheon in the King's absence, thought it possible that a hunt might be arranged. The royal huntsmen scoured the neighbourhood; villages not far away reported a wild boar as damaging their crops and making his lair in a small swamp near by. The head huntsman reconnoitred the locality and judged a hunt feasible. The bit of marsh was ringed by beaters and encircled by hunting nets. Next day the guests, Helen, many of her household and even Aithre went out to the rendezvous: Paris, several of his gentlemen, the seneschal and some of his underlings driving chariots; Helen and Aithre in a covered carriage drawn by cream-coloured mules, the menials on foot, as was the long line of under-huntsmen, each holding back a pair of huge Molossian hounds, tugging at their leashes. The spot was reached, the ladies escorted to a grassy knoll by the pocket-net, and, when they were composed to look on, the beaters began their advance through the marsh and the dogs were let loose. They soon roused the boar and he,

without much doubling back, was run into the pocket-net and there brought to bay by the bravest of the hounds. Paris then, bare-headed, handsome, in his abbreviated green hunting-tunic, spear in hand, nimbly vaulted the high net, nonchalantly strolled up to the boar, hardly swerved from his rush, but planted accurately between his shoulder-blades the gleaming head of his hunting-spear, a fearsome triangle of steel, almost as big as a spade, shaped much like a shark's-tooth, its thin point and flaring barbs honed to a razor-edge. The boar died almost instantly, amid the applause of all the on-lookers, Helen by no means the least enthusiastic.

Paris, saying that the Trojan princesses played ball with their brothers and cousins and praising them as really capable players, coaxed Helen into the ball-court and soon taught her the rudiments of the game. He cleverly devised a system of handicaps on himself which gave her the pleasant sensation of holding her own with him at the game. In fact, she displayed no despicable aptitude and proved to possess keen eyes, quick muscles, good judgment and such accurate intuitions as to what her adversary was likely to do, that, as they played again and again, the handicaps on Paris were pro-

gressively reduced to such as he declared were normal for a man playing against a woman. Helen visibly glowed with self-congratulation at her proficiency. They played each morning early, but Paris always insisted on stopping soon, saying that if she played too long she would wake next day stiff and sore, would be slow in recovering and would inevitably hate ball-playing instead of loving it.

They played also at the three board-games then in vogue at king's courts; the simpler ancestors of modern parcheesi, backgammon and checkers. Helen was already a good player of all three, as then played, and at any of the three they were evenly enough matched to make their game absorbing. Indoor life was unknown in those days, only winter's frost or snow or high winds or rain in summer drove people of any rank indoors by day. The queen and her guest sat at their games on the upper terrace of the palace.

The foreigners gave no hint of any intention to depart nor did Helen find their stay wearisome. Paris and all his retinue were quartered in an isolated pavilion, half palace, half villa, built apart from the main palace about its own three courtyards, with its own servants'-quarters, stables and other service buildings. There they all slept, both all of each night, for all classes of mankind, in those days, went to bed before dusk faded into darkness

and rose as soon as dawn began to brighten; and also nearer two hours than one of each hot, drowsy afternoon. There they had their meals, a bite of breakfast, a lavish midday meal, and an elaborate dinner ending just before it was too dark to see. Each morning after his mouthful of bread and wine Paris would saunter over to the palace and either into the ball-court or up onto the upper terrace. Generally Helen and he began their day with a set or two of ball-games. Later they would go up onto the upper terrace and play at one of the board-games through the morning and again in the late afternoon. At first Aithre had sat with them, Hermione had played about the three, and the servitors had idled just out of earshot. As the days passed Aithre had had her chair set midway of the terrace and theirs at the southern end. Day after day she sat further and further off, till it became invariable that Paris and Helen were alone at their corner of the terrace, while Aithre, Hermione and all the attendants clustered at its north corner.

When games palled Helen recited the lays telling of the exploits of Thestius, of the labours of Hercules, of the two sieges of Thebes, of the boar-hunt at Calydon, of the voyage of the Argo; Paris of the deeds of Dardanus, Tros, Assaracus, Ilus and others of his ancestors. Sometimes, very much as with princes and court-ladies in far more recent

times, he held her skein of yarn while she wound it into a ball. Often they chatted of nothing in particular while she embroidered.

As the days passed, each day bringing from Menelaus a runner telling of uniform, but very slow, progress in the campaign against the Arcadians, of interminable skirmishes amid the forested hills and craggy mountains, they spent less and less time at ball-play or gaming and more and more in mere chat. Day by day they talked less and their intervals of silence were longer, more and more they looked away from each other, gazing out seaward, glancing at each other from time to time, making efforts to talk and falling silent, moody and restless.

Thus they were seated one lovely afternoon. The mellow radiance of the declining sun haloed Helen's glossy locks and the yellow curls about Paris' temples. Each, according to convention, was habited in white garments heavily embroidered in leaf and flower patterns worked in green, red and blue; Helen merely held her embroidery frame, her needle was idle. He was twiddling one of the ivory pieces picked up from the board. Both had been silent for a long time; the silence was becoming irksome.

Paris at last spoke.

"Why not say it?" he breathed. "I know it as well as if you said it never so plainly and never so

often; no utterance of mine is needed to make it plainer to you. We love each other. You love me and I know it and you know it and you know I know it. I love you and you know it and I know you know it. We are so mad for each other that we can think of nothing else except how intensely we desire each other, how keenly we long for each other, how utterly we are consumed by overmastering passion. We are tingling to possess each other. We are aflame. Why not say it: I love you as I have never loved any human being; I am ready to dare anything, to risk anything to make you mine. You love me and you are so much in love that you cannot but listen to me and every fibre of you rejoices to hear me tell you how much I love you."

Helen stood up.

"Not one word more!" she commanded crisply.

She looked Paris straight in the eyes, her face wrathful and indignant. Yet he noted a suggestion of pain in her expression. She gulped and went on:

"I am shocked and hurt. I am horrified that any man could dare to speak so to me; to the daughter of Tyndarus, to the wife of Menelaus, to the Queen of Sparta! I am disappointed in you. My husband esteemed you

so highly that he thought you fit to be left alone with his wife as her guest; I have been exalting you more and more from day to day. I am used to seeing men in love with me and I admired your self-control, your external gaiety, your apparent respect for me. My illusions about you are shattered. It saddens me.

"You have grievously insulted me. The very least you can do now is to depart without one other word to me. I shall notify my seneschal that you have decided that you cannot wait for my husband's return, as he has so earnestly entreated you to do by every runner that he has sent me, that you have come to the conclusion that you must sail early tomorrow. He will care for you in the interval and speed you on your way. Farewell!"

Paris, conflicting emotions chasing each other across his face, inclined his head and turned away.

That night Aithre, leaving her bed and stealing noiselessly along the corridor, listened again and again outside Helen's bedroom. Each time she heard her sobbing.

Next morning she took every precaution that her darling might be undisturbed, hoping that the deep sleep of utter exhaustion might give her misery a respite before dawn. To her amazement Helen appeared as usual soon after sunrise, with no trace of

sleeplessness or exhaustion or of recent weeping on her lovely face; serene and beautiful.

Not much later a page informed Aithre that Paris desired to speak to her. She acceded and when the Prince was with her he said:

"Yesterday, by inadvertence, I gravely offended your mistress. At her behest I have made all my preparations for departure and shall sail within the hour. She and I will never set eyes on each other again. Before I depart I crave from her the boon of a few words with her, that I may thank her for her hospitality, may beg her forgiveness for my unintentional blunder, and that we may bid each other farewell."

Aithre agreed to convey his message.

Helen heard her impassively and said:

"I am willing to see him for a moment just before he sets out. Tell him he may bid me farewell in the public courtyard before the main gate of the palace."

There, not long afterwards, he was waiting before the principal doorway, in full sight of the sentries, the sentinels, the guardsmen under their colonnade, the page-boys, the water-carriers, the sweepers, the faggoters with their donkeys, and all the rest of the habitual frequenters of the main courtyard, but out of earshot of the nearest.

"You have been most kind to me," said Paris, "and I could not bring myself to depart without hearing you say that you may some time forgive me, if there is any hope of your saying so. I know I am unforgivable and I shall never forgive myself; but you are so comprehending and sympathetic that perhaps you might forgive me."

"I have forgiven you," said Helen. "What you did was unpardonable, but I realise how you felt and I make allowances."

"I shall never cease to thank you," said Paris. "And now, as I am on the point of putting to sea, let us exchange our first and last farewell."

Helen gazed at him, gazed hungrily, gazed about her, lowered her eyes, and then said, in a voice hardly louder than a whisper:

"I think I shall go with you to the pier and shall say farewell there."

Paris, flushing with pleasure, bowed gracefully in silence.

"But," she recanted, in a flutter, "it will take a long time to bring round a carriage."

Aithre, at her elbow, said:

"Your carriage is ready in the covered way."

As her handsome pair of cream-coloured mules drew the conveyance along the smooth road to the harbour, following Paris in one of the palace chariots, Helen said to Aithre:

"Whatever on earth put it into your head to have this carriage waiting?"

"I knew that you would relent at the last moment," said Aithre. "My father was a king, my husband was a king, my son was a king, I was a queen most of my life; I know the hearts of queens."

The three Trojan ships lay moored in a dock between twin piers, each more than twice as long as a war-galley, a dock designed to accommodate four galleys at once. The *Phorcid* and the *Tritonid* lay side by side, their sterns close to the quay, the *Tritonid* against the southern pier; against the northern pier, beyond the *Phorcid*, was moored the *Nereid*. The sharp, low bows of all three pointed seaward. On both piers there was great bustle, of stevedores completing the lading of the ships, and of members of their crews. There was even a crowd of porters, port-wardens and idlers on the southern pier beside the *Tritonid*. The chariots and the carriage halted on the northern pier.

Sea-going war-galleys of those days would be described, by any unsophisticated modern seeing them for the first time, as big war-canoes. Each had but one mast, and that was never stepped until the ship had been rowed to sea, clear of shoals, reefs and the dangerous and unpredictable flaws of wind frequent near rocky shores. In harbour the mast was always down and resting in its supports amidships.

All war-galleys were long, shallow and narrow, open from bow to near the stern, where there was a small deck on which the steersman perched and from which he managed the two big, heavy, broad-bladed steering-oars, that to windward always in the water, the leeward steering-oar always hoisted clear of the water; since it was not for centuries afterwards that maritime art progressed to the use of a single rudder precisely amidships aft. Under the steersman's deck was the only part of the vessel not open to the sky, a sort of cubby-hole more or less like a tiny cabin. Under the sky and exposed to rain, sun and spray sat, each on his thwart, the fifty warriors who rowed the vessel, each with his own oar. Each galley was designed to accommodate a full hundred warriors at once, so that each man had alternating intervals, even when rowing was continuous, of rowing and resting.

Aithre and Helen, descending from their carriage, walked out on the northern pier with Paris to the gang-plank of the *Nereid*. There they stood, all three mute and at a loss. Paris, his crimson cloak dangling behind him, looked very handsome in his embroidered tunic of undyed white wool, and

the poplar-wreath about his head, close-clipped and tight on his yellow curls, became him.

"You have a very graceful ship," said Helen, admiring the *Nereid*. "I have never seen a foreign war-ship so near."

"She'll soon be out of sight forever," said Paris. "Step aboard a moment and look her over before we cast off."

The harbour of Gytheon was not a well-protected port and the ground-swell diffused by the great billows of the open sea shouldering in through the wide harbour-mouth made itself felt, even in the dock, as a barely perceptible, lazy rise and fall of the smooth water. This caused a heaving of the moored galleys.

As Paris held out his hand to guide Helen down the steeply-sloping, unrailed, heaving gang-plank, Aithre, looking across the dock to the southern pier, saw the foreman of the gang of stevedores gazing at her fixedly. She waved her hand to him.

From stem to stern of the galley, between the oarsmen's thwarts, ran a narrow gangway for the seamen, the officers or for any one moving lengthwise of the craft. Along this, between the oarsmen seated at their oars, the reliefs half-recumbent against the bulwarks, the thong-fringed inner hollows of the shields with which the bulwarks were

hung, Paris, Helen and Aithre edged aft to the steersman's platform and inspected it and the tiny cabin beneath it; turning, they edged forward, Helen greatly admiring the clean-cut, self-respecting, self-controlled, intelligent, handsome, tanned faces of the youthful oarsmen. As with all men who saw her near at hand their countenances expressed wondering adoration. Smiling graciously at them, she made her way between their two lines forward to the bows. There the three stood, nothing in front of them except the low gunwale above the cut-water, Paris and Helen side by side, Aithre behind them. Helen was gazing seaward, trying to descry Cythera through the dazzle on the horizon. Paris raised his hand and waved it.

Helen, intent, did not feel the ship glide forward as the hawsers were cast off noiselessly, as the noiseless oars pulled all together in strokes so short that they were hardly strokes at all; did not perceive the pier-head slipping past; did not feel the gradually greater heave of the sea beneath her, did not, unconsciously lingering, consciously dreading the inevitable instant of unavoidable farewell, become aware of the gathering way of the ship as she rose and dipped, rose and dipped, over waves each larger than the former.

When a splash of spray from the cut-water brought her to herself and she glanced behind her,

the galley was already many times her length beyond the pier-head.

Helen screamed.

Paris clasped her in both his arms.

On his shoulder she sobbed:

"Oh! what have I done? What have I done?"

She fainted, limp in Paris' arms, sliding down, collapsing on the bow-planks.

Paris stooped to pick her up.

"Leave her as she is till she comes to," Aithre admonished him. "The wind here will revive her soon."

When Helen stirred and struggled to rise, Paris gathered her into his arms, and, between the two rows of his henchmen, rhythmically bending forward to feather and straining back to pull in their longest and strongest stroke, he carried her to the tiny cabin aft.

Of all that day the only impression which Helen could afterwards recall was her amazement not long after noon, when she noticed from the sharp shadows cast by the brilliant sunrays, that the sun was on their port quarter and realised that they were headed, not northeastwards, but almost due west. She never forgot her inward comparison of this obvious, though very subtle, ruse, with the transparent directness of everything Menelaus ever had done or could be conceived of as doing.

She had then insisted on being helped up onto the contracted after-deck. From there, holding on to the rail, unresistingly allowing Paris to support her by clasping her close, she had swept the horizon, seen only sky and sea, not even the loom of land, and had burst into tears. Thereafter, as before then, under the steersman's deck, in the tiny half-cabin, she had passed most of the day in a dull torpor of numb apathy. Sometimes she slept, tossing and moaning in her sleep.

The sun was near the western horizon when she heard a shout from the lookout, the faint sound of far-off cheering from the other crews, and a burst of cheers from the tired oarsmen, who had been rowing all day to increase the speed imparted to the ship by the strong, fair-following breeze that bellied the great sail, and who now glanced behind them and yelled their joy. Ascending to the after-deck, this time with less need of assistance and more support, she beheld, against the sunset sky, a craggy peak, forested to near its summit, rising steeply from a tiny isle. As they drew near there was yet light enough to see that the *Phorcid* and the *Tritonid*, which had been following all day, were now well ahead of the *Nereid* and outspeeding her, that the little island was pine-clad up to the cliffs of the peak, had shimmering forests of trees like oaks, beeches and chestnuts lower down, showed glades

alternating with headlands near sea-level, and presented to them a long sickle of broad, gently sloping, even sand-beach, on which, even before the sail was lowered, the yard hauled down and the mast let down into its crutches, they could make out the *Tritonid* and the *Phorcid* already hauled ashore, sterns first, and a tent being set up.

Deftly the oarsmen and steersman guided the *Nereid* into and through the surf; at just the right instant the forward oars were unshipped and drawn inboard; at the same instant all the crew not at the oars, each ready in his place between two rowers, sprang over the bulwarks and steadied the ship as the after oarsmen, straining their utmost, assisted the wave which she rode to beach her. Craftily they beached her, each oarsman, the moment he had stowed his indrawn oar, leaping overboard to assist his fellows. When the ship was half beached, Paris led Helen forward to the prow and, leaving her for Aithre to steady, leapt onto the wet sand and held up his outspread hands. Helen, steadied on the gunwale by Aithre, leapt into his arms. Aithre, nimbly for a landswoman no longer young, let herself down over the rail and dropped firmly on her feet.

Neither noticed the *Nereid's* crew relaunching her and rebeaching her stern first, a ticklish manœuvre never omitted in those days, for not

even the most reckless pirates would venture to camp on a strange beach except with their ships pointing seawards and ready for prompt flight.

In Aithre's arms Helen dissolved into a passion of agonised tears. Aithre, uttering no word, no whisper, held her close and patted her. When Helen's convulsions of misery abated and the storm of her sobs was wearing itself out, she was near enough to being calmed to say:

"Oh! Aithre, here I am, all alone with you, with no maid, no change of clothes, not anything of my own. What shall I do! What shall I do!"

"Don't worry, darling!" Aithre soothed her. "Come with me, let me show you your tent."

The twilight was fading into the gloaming as Aithre led Helen across the firm, dry sand. There, well clear of the overhanging boughs of the virgin forest trees, well above the inmost-reaching lash of the last swish of the largest breakers, Helen saw, between two crackling campfires, plain in their ruddy glare, recognisable even in what remained of the twilight, her own travelling-tent, set up as on any of her infrequent journeys to and from Mycenæ, its door-flaps drawn outward and fastened back, and, between them, Sellasia, her personal maid. Entering the tent, in a daze, there was light enough for her to see it all furnished as usual on each of her journeys, her bed, made up with its sky-

blue silk coverlet and pink silk down pillows; the tent lined with its inner hangings of dark-blue silk, spangled with silver stars; at its head and foot her two individual chests of ebony, inlaid with ivory and mother-of-pearl, made to hold her mirrors, combs, cosmetics, jars of ointments and salves, flasks of lotions and washes; glass-bottles of perfumes; her necklaces, bracelets, hair-pins, and other belongings; set about were her larger cedar chests for her robes, gowns, cloaks and other apparel.

Helen, so dazed that she was half numb, cried in amazement:

"Aithre! where did all these things come from?"

"From your store-room and your treasure-room," Aithre answered calmly.

"But how did they come to be here?" Helen queried, panting.

"They came on the *Tritonid*," Aithre explained. "She beached first of the three ships and Zarax urged the slaves at once to set up your tent and have it all ready for you."

Helen stared about, still in a daze.

"From the store-room and the treasure-room?" she repeated questioningly.

"Yes," Aithre explained, unruffled. "I had carried down to the quay and stowed on board the *Tritonid* everything that was in your store-room and your treasure-room."

"Not grandfather's hoard!" cried Helen in horror.

"Yes," Aithre affirmed. "All the treasures of King Thestius; rugs, hangings, wall-ornaments, swords; his gold banquet-service, goblets, dippers, platters, mixing-bowls; and the caskets of loose gems, and all the treasure given you out of the vaults of Tiryns."

"Aithre!" Helen screamed, "what have you done! It is bad enough to have eloped. You eloped with Ægeus, but you were a maiden. I have done worse, infinitely worse, than you, for I have deserted a husband than whom no wife ever had a better, and I have forsaken my dear child; I am disgraced for life and forever dishonoured and shamed. But you have tarnished my good name and Paris' reputation with a blot far worse than that of any elopement; with an ineffaceable stain. You have made us appear as thieves, as having plotted beforehand and perpetrated a most despicable theft. I could kill myself to end my mortification! Did you say all the treasures from Tiryns? Surely not the great ingots of silver and gold?"

"Every one of them," Aithre stated placidly.

"Oh! why can't I die!" wailed Helen. "Why

don't I drop dead for shame! How could you do it, Aithre?"

"They were all yours," Aithre declared. "They were formally presented to you, publicly proclaimed as your personal property for your life and as yours to do with as you might please. I had them all brought along, even the weapons, the priceless weapons, the armour and shields and swords and spears of Tantalus and Pelops."

"How came you to think of such knavery?" Helen raged.

"Darling," said Aithre imperturbably, "they were all your property. When you departed from Laconia there was no sense in leaving behind your heritage and your dower. So I gave orders to have them carried to the quay, so as to have them there in readiness to be loaded on the *Tritonid* and the *Phorcid* if you were to sail off in the *Nereid*."

"But how," Helen demanded, "could you so much as conjecture that I would go aboard the *Nereid*, let alone be so heedless as to let myself be carried to sea in her?"

"Darling," said Aithre, "I was in love with Ægeus. I felt for you. I cared not what any one might say or think. I cared only for you. I wanted you to have your heart's desire."

"But how," Helen persisted, "could you know

what was my heart's desire? I had no inkling myself of what I was going to do, no premonition whatever. If I could not read my own heart, even crying my eyes out all night, how could you?"

"My lamb!" said Aithre, "my father was a king, my husband was a king, my son was a king; I have been a queen much of my life, I know the hearts of queens."

IV: THE FRENZY

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FOR some days Troilus and Deiphobus had been hunting in the glens of Ida. They were camped among the lower foothills to westward, by the bend of the Ilnois, in sight of the sea. About sunrise the dogs roused a stag near the camp and chased him past, a bare hundred yards away. The princes had not meant to continue their hunting, and no nets had been set that morning, but they had breakfasted, their horses stood ready harnessed and the stag ran so temptingly that Troilus was in his chariot at a bound, and drove off himself, his charioteer standing idle behind him clinging to the ears of the chariot-rail. Deiphobus halloed a futile protest after him and then, shouting hasty orders to his retinue, commanded his charioteer to follow, taking his place behind him without hurry. Troilus was more impetuous, lashing his mares unmercifully and at first drew ahead. But Deiphobus had the better team and they were better driven, so that he soon was able to keep his brother well in sight. The stag ran down the valley of the Ilnois to its confluence with the Scamander, doubled

there sharply toward the sea below Tenedos, veered toward Gergis, and doubled a third time toward the coast. The dogs followed relentlessly on the scent and ran their quarry into the surf on the empty shore between Tenedos and Sigeum, not many miles from Troy itself. Troilus came up as the stag turned at bay. His first spear went too high, and his second merely grazed its haunch. Deiphobus, when he stepped from his chariot upon the sand, declined to hurl a spear or to lend one, and stood watching the dogs make their kill in the shallow water. Troilus waded out and cut the beast's throat.

The charioteers had finished dressing the quarry and were tying its legs together while the dogs quarrelled over the entrails, when Troilus, staring seaward, remarked:

"There's a warship coming from around Tenedos."

Deiphobus, shading his eyes with one hand, gazed steadily.

"She came out of Tenedos harbour," he declared.

"It seems to me," Troilus reflected, "I ought to know her."

"You ought," Deiphobus replied. "Don't you recognise her?"

"No," Troilus admitted.

"Well," Deiphobus told him slowly, "I make her out to be the *Nereid*."

"Paris' ship?" Troilus exclaimed.

"Just her," Deiphobus replied, "and if I am not mistaken I can make out the others behind her."

"So can I," Troilus agreed. "Which is the *Phorcid?*"

"Too far off to tell," Deiphobus answered easily, "and it does not matter; the point is he is coming home all safe; mother will be immensely relieved."

"How do you know he is safe?" Troilus queried.

"The sails are white," Deiphobus lectured, "and can't you see the mast-head garland against the sky?"

"Not yet," Troilus replied.

They stood side by side watching the ships, a princely pair of brothers, recognisably of the same family, but very different men. Troilus was tall and big chested, but still a lad, manly, but not yet filled out and toughened as a seasoned warrior. His hair was yellow and curly, his nose small, and nearly straight, his blue eyes bright, his babyish complexion clear, and not a wrinkle was on his young face. Deiphobus was an aberrant variant of the same

type. He was taller than his tall brother, thin, spare and sinewy. His black hair was straight and lank, his skin was tanned and dark, he had many wrinkles on his forehead, a deep cleft between his close thick brows, and sharply marked crow's-feet at the corners of his eyes. His neck was long, his Adam's apple prominent, his chin pointed, his jaw sickle-shaped, his cheek-bones high and sharp, his inscrutable black eyes without a sparkle, his nose narrow, hooked and projecting over his compressed mouth. There was about him something of the wolf and hawk, vicious and splenetic.

"I see the garland," Troilus cried.

"And I," said Deiphobus, "see Paris on the stern platform of the after-deck. And I see two women beside him."

"What eyes you have!" Troilus exclaimed. "I cannot yet distinguish even that there are human figures on the after-deck!"

They stood gazing absorbedly as the three crafts drew on, their sails bellying in the crisp morning breeze, bulging silvery in the early sunlight against the deep blue sky. The ships leaned with the wind, the white foam spouted under their prows, the oars dipped and flashed and dipped and flashed beneath the rows of painted shields along the gunnels, glowing gaudily in the sunlight, the crimson eye painted around the hawse-hole of the *Nereid* stared stonily

across the wavelets; they could even make out the sapphire curves of the snake painted along the edge of the bulwarks aft.

"I can see Paris now," Troilus cried, and he waved his scarlet cloak above his head in greeting. Apparently they were not seen or noticed by any one on the ships.

"Yes," Troilus exclaimed again, "and I can see the two women beside him."

As the ships drew abreast of them Deiphobus kept his eyes on the group upon the after-platform. When the ship heeled he caught the outline of one of the women against the sky. His dry cynical exterior was natural to Deiphobus, not assumed, yet it masked volcanoes of passion smouldering deep hidden. He had capacities for emotion which he himself did not suspect. When he caught that glimpse, as if the ship had been near enough to distinguish a face, he felt a terrifying qualm surge through him, a stab of red-hot pain, almost a faintness, and a tide of inexplicable, unendurable joy, revolting and appalling. Once only in his life had he felt the like, when he was on probation in the army and for the first time heard the hiss of a hard-set arrow as it whizzed past his ear not a hand's breadth from his skull.

He mastered himself, darted a swift glance at Troilus, boyishly unobservant and joyful. He

looked at the chariots. The stag hung lashed to his brother's.

"You two follow in that car," he commanded the charioteers. "Troilus," he added, "come with me."

"Where?" Troilus enquired.

"To the city," Deiphobus replied; "we can be there long before they can round Sigeum and make a landing."

Troilus doubted the possibility, but he was not of a contentious disposition and said nothing.

Deiphobus tightened the reins, glanced to right and left, and also behind him to make sure Troilus was ready, and then nodded to the grooms to loose the mares' bits. As they sprang forward he let them have their heads and when they were once warmed he gave an exhibition of driving which amazed Troilus. Charioteering, in the heroic age, was about the most exacting athletic exercise ever invented by mortal men. The horses of those days had not been gentled by generations of ancestors each better broken than the last. They were almost wild animals to such a degree that riding them was undreamed of. They were attached to the chariot not by traces, but by a yoke set across their necks and shoulders. They were guided, but scarcely controlled, by reins, one for each horse, made fast at one end to the bed of the chariot and run through

a ring at the inner end of each bit, so that the driver had a pulley-purchase on his team. If he drew tight the rein of the near horse, that pulled its head towards its mate's, the off-horse sprang away and the team veered to the left. Pulling both reins at once jammed the team's noses together and forced them to stop, slow down, or fall. It seems a lunatic method, but generations of men drove millions of horses so for hundreds of years. So Deiphobus drove his mares. The chariot was pulled by the pole, which played in a ring lashed under the yoke. The pole was lashed to the single axle, there were no springs, the wheels had but four spokes each and the tires were generally raw-hide, by preference to bronze, not from lack of metal. The bed of the chariot was not much bigger than the seat of an arm-chair; its rail did not come much above the knee of a man standing on it; except the rail there was nothing to lean against or catch hold of. Yet two men commonly stood in one chariot, while the horses tore at full gallop across any sort of country, through bushes and briars, over gulleys and stones, up and down slopes, often on a side hill where one wheel was much higher than the other. So practised were all warriors and nobles, that they stood easily

on their scanty footing, swaying hardly at all as the chariot lurched and swayed, jolted, bounced, bounded and banged along. So Deiphobus and Troilus, their long hair streaming in the wind, were hurled across the face of the land, standing easily as a Kanaka on his surf-board or a tight-rope-walker on the high wire. Troilus was an expert, inured to all the chances of the sport, but he was astounded at the way Deiphobus drove, lashing the mares unmercifully, yelling at them and displaying an urgency and recklessness of which his younger brother had not dreamed him capable.

Priam's Troy had streets mostly like those of a modern oriental town, crooked and too narrow to be practicable except for foot passers or donkeys. But from its market square below the citadel eight main streets, wide enough for two chariots abreast, radiated to the eight city gates. Deiphobus drove through the Tenedan gate and lashed his sweating mares up the slope toward the assembly-square, chariots and wains taking the wall at the sound of his team's hoofs; donkeys, market-women, children and dogs scattering right and left before him.

As he permitted his weary mares to stop at the main gate of the palace, Hector, his crimson cloak hanging easily behind him, stepped sedately out, tall and big and placid.

"Deiphobus!" he exclaimed, pleased and sur-

prised, and then, as he saw the plight of the team, he cried sharply.

"You've half killed your mares! Look at the lather they are in."

"I was in a hurry," Deiphobus explained.

"What is wrong?" Hector queried.

"Nothing," Deiphobus assured him. "Paris has returned. We sighted his ships bearing up from Tenedos. Where is father?"

"In the audience hall," Hector answered. He beckoned and several grooms, coming out of the court-yard, seized the mares' heads.

The three brothers went into the palace, crossed the great court and passed along a passageway to the audience hall, itself more a court than a room. The long narrow court of it had four columns on each end and nine on each side. They were not round, but square, after the fashion of the time, and tapered downward, being nearly twice as large under their imposts as upon their bases. Behind the columns, under the upper story they supported, was a linteled corridor on both sides of the court, as at its entrance end. At the other end was the audience hall proper, separated from the court only by the four columns, and lighted only on its open front upon it. Its sides were solid walls against which were built stone benches for the councillors. Midway of the back wall stood the throne. By

tradition from Minos the Great of Crete every throne of that period around the Ægean was without arms, and had a tall back patterned after an oak leaf. The throne of Troy was not of marble, but of carved wood, gilded. On it, high on its dais, sat Sultan Priam, his turban flashing with gems even in the dusky gloom of the audience hall, his embroidered robe ample about him, his grey beard flowing over his chest, a dignified, regal figure.

As Deiphobus approached, his quick breathing came to his father's ears.

"Son," he said, "you bring news."

"Family news," Deiphobus replied succinctly.

Priam signed to Tachybates, and the herald, stepping forward into the open court, cried aloud his order. The crowd shuffled out and left the court and hall to Priam, his councillors and his sons.

When Tachybates faced about and leaned against the jamb of the main door Priam spoke again.

"Your news, my son."

"Paris is returning," said Deiphobus. "His ships passed up the coast from Tenedos soon after sunrise!"

"But this is no family news," his father objected. "This should be cried in the market for a joy to all the people."

"This is not all," Deiphobus protested. "He brings a woman with him."

"This is even more joyful," said Priam. "I bade him bring back a wife. Let the news be proclaimed at once. Tell Tachybates to herald it. And when we know the lady's name and the name of her father, let these be proclaimed also for all to hear, yes, and the dowry she brings with her."

"The dowry she brings with her," spoke Deiphobus, "is war and fire and sword and blood without end."

"Have you gone mad?" Priam cried. "You are always too gloomy, too prone to anticipate disasters, to imagine the worst in anything. But this is mere madness."

"I am no madman," Deiphobus replied solemnly. "You will agree with me when you hear her father's name, and what is more important, her husband's."

"Her husband's?" Priam queried sharply.

"Even her husband's name," Deiphobus answered. "For as sure as I am standing here the woman Paris brings with him is the wife of King Menelaus of Sparta, and daughter of Tyndarus of Sparta, even Helen, the jewel of the world."

"This is indeed madness," Priam exclaimed. "Who told you this?"

"No one told me," Deiphobus replied. "My own eyes told me. I saw her."

"Saw her," Priam repeated. "Where?"

"Upon the after-deck platform of the *Nereid*, seated beside Paris," Deiphobus made answer.

"Where were you when you saw her?" Priam pressed him.

"Upon Broken-Oar Beach," Deiphobus replied. "Troilus and I had just killed a stag there."

"This is worse than madness," Priam declared, incensed. "The shoal off Broken-Oar Beach is long and broad. No penteconter can run close enough to the shore for any one on the beach to recognise a face. And you claim to have recognised a woman from beyond the sea, a woman you have never set eyes on, and she upon a moving warship, off Broken-Oar Beach. And for this wild tale you make me break off my audience and drive my people from their rightful stand in my hall. This is childish."

"As sure as you and I live and breathe," Deiphobus asserted, "as sure as Paris is coming home, the woman with him is Helen of Sparta, sister of Clytemnestra of Mycenæ, sister of Pollux and Castor, daughter of Leda and Tyndarus."

"Why have you conjectured this folly?" Priam shouted angrily. "You cannot know it, by your own account."

"Know it I do," Deiphobus asseverated. "On the

bosom of the earth and sea, under the canopy of the firmament, beneath the eyes of the stars and moon and sun, there can be but one woman such as I saw beside Paris upon his ship."

Priam tugged at his beard.

"This," he said, "is worse than childishness or folly or madness; this is a curse from the dread sisters of the world below."

Deiphobus stood silent.

"Tachybates," Priam called. "Let in the folk again, and proclaim that no man will be heard except danger of life presses for hearing at once. Hasten the audience to a close and then herald abroad that Paris, my son, comes home. Even now, he will be landing in the harbour. Make all things ready for me, for all of us, for the populace as well to go forth to meet and greet him."

In fact all Troy was soon streaming along the road to the harbour. The silt of ages, brought down and spread by the Scamander, has in the course of centuries entirely filled in the deep bay which then extended well into the land between Sigeum and Rhœtium. The procession of welcome had not much more than a mile to traverse from the Sigean gate. At its head went Priam, in his state chariot, brave with bronze tires, carved hubs and inlaying of ivory and gold, drawn by a pair of big dapple-greys, Tachybates driving. Then came a pair of hand-

some cream-coloured mules, their harness all bosses of silver. They drew a four-wheeled covered carriage, canopied and curtained, fringed and tasselled; in it Hecuba sat with three of her daughters, Dione, Cassandra and Creusa. There followed chariots bearing princes or councillors, two by two, and carriages conveying princesses and other notables, four by four. Alongside, between, and after the vehicles trooped the jubilant rabble afoot, cheering for their popular idol returned.

Half way to the harbour they met Paris in a chariot, his herald driving the magnificent team of blood-bay mares Nestor had given him when he visited Pylos. Behind him was a covered carriage, like those of the princesses, drawn by two roan mules. In it were two women, one with head uncovered, her hair showing silvery against the crimson curtains behind her. Her companion was muffled; only her eyes were visible between the coif on her head and the veil drawn across her face. Swathed as she was in wrappings the grace of her form was manifest in spite of them. Deiphobus, as he caught sight of her, felt his being submerged by an inundating deluge of conflicting emotions and sensations. Deiphobus was not only a spearman but an archer as well. He had killed his man in many a combat. More than once had he held his arrow till his onrushing foe was not ten paces from him,

had seen the shaft pierce his chest as the bow-cord twanged, had had branded upon his memory that horrid instant before the stricken man collapsed, when he was still erect and sentient, torn by earthquakes of agony and despair. As Deiphobus summoned all his forces to repress any outward show of the inundation of exquisite torture and racking bliss which whirled through his veins, he realised that this was how it felt to be shot through the heart.

Both the procession and retinue halted. Paris, abreast of Priam's team, had his charioteer swerve sharply out of the road. He leapt from the chariot, waved a greeting to his father with a cheery hand, just clasping his as he passed. Upon the hub of the queen's carriage he sprang, and clasped his mother to him, Hecuba's arms about his neck and her face to his. The action was charmingly spontaneous and boyish, yet not undignified, as he did it. The people cheered with a genial Trojan good-will. After a long embrace of his mother Paris leapt to earth and strode ahead to his father.

"Who is the lady you bring with you?" Priam asked him.

"My wife, sir," Paris replied proudly.

"Whose daughter is she?" the Sultan insisted, "and from what country?"

"Presentations will be best arranged at the Palace. She needs rest and so do I, for that matter.

So do the beasts, besides. It is true we rested two nights and a day at Tenedos, but we are all sea-worn. Let us get into the city and talk afterwards."

In fact, talk they did interminably. Once he had Helen and Aithre and the treasures safely housed in the Palace, Paris had no sooner eaten than he requested his father to summon a full family council with all the elders of Troy. Before them he boldly avowed his abduction of the Queen of Laconia. The announcement loosed a flood of discussion.

From that mere innate inertia which swayed him so frequently and which so often served him better than any guile, Paris kept silent and let the others discuss and dispute and wrangle. He came in for a great deal of reprobation and reprehension and for some vigorous defence. He was the darling of his father and of the younger princes, nobody could help liking him, and he had a scape-grace charm that won him friends, even among the councillors. He listened to reproaches, censures, even execrations, smiling the while and mute. Denunciation and apologies, vindications and abuse, alternated for hours, the altercation grew more and more violent and the probability of any settlement seemed less and less as the time passed. Priam was plainly torn between his love for his son and his far-sighted statecraft. The warriors were divided, the older for

prudence, the younger for Paris. Even the councillors gave varying opinions. The debate was protracted until dusk shut in. Then the slaves lit a great fire in the open court, set flambeaux in the torch-brackets on the columns, and lamps under the galleries. In this shaking light the council continued.

"As to the woman," Hector said, "I do not know. But the treasure looks ill."

"I am of the same mind," said Æneas. "All those chests of tapestries, garments, weapons, decorations, utensils, and ingots of silver and gold, all those jewels; this mass of booty raises my gorge."

"The treasure is no booty"—Paris spoke for the first time—"but Helen's property, most of it her dower, and neither Helen nor I had any part in carrying it off. Aithre packed the chests and they were all on the *Phorcid* and the *Tritonid*. I knew nothing of their presence until we landed at Kranæ. Until then I supposed that Helen had with her only what garments and what little jewelry she was wearing. Until we reached Astyphalea I had no guess of the number of chests or of the value of their contents. The hoard is intact, except for what changes of clothing Helen needed on the voyage. I care nothing for the chattels. Send them

back, send Helen's weight in gold with them, if you like. I care only for my wife, nothing for her dower."

"You all seem to assume as a matter of course," spoke up Polites from the colonnade, where he leaned against a pillar, "that we are certain to have to fight for the woman whether we retain the pelf or return it. By all means, then, let us not surrender the treasure, but keep that and fight for both. It will be not a greater war that way, and the stakes will be better worth fighting for."

"Boy," said Priam, "it is not fitting that you should speak thus in a council among your elders."

"But the boy speaks sense," Troilus declared, "and for my part I am against yielding treasure or woman or anything to any Greeks or to all of them. Let them come if they will."

Whereupon the arguing and squabbling broke out afresh.

Hector put an end to it.

"We are all sleepy," he said, "and no two of us of the same mind. I hold that the matter should be referred to the people."

Priam approved and Paris made no objection, so that the gathering unanimously agreed to call a meeting of the people, lay the matter before them and abide by their decision.

As the council broke up Deiphobus accosted Paris.

"Do you mean to abide by the decision of the assembly?" he asked incredulously.

"I certainly do mean just that," Paris declared, "and abide by it I shall."

"Do you mean to tell me," Deiphobus exclaimed, astonished, "that if they vote to send Helen back to Menelaus, you will give her up without a struggle?"

"Without an effort," Paris asserted. "Without an argument."

"In your place," Deiphobus vowed hotly, "I would not give her up without a fight. I would fight all Troy for her, were I in your place."

"Even in your place, as you are," Paris retorted, "I would not be surprised to see you try to fight all Troy and me also for her, as things stand!"

"You mean—" Deiphobus began.

"You know what I mean," Paris interrupted him. "But you need not worry. You will do nothing but burn with your own fire. I know the symptoms by this time. It was so everywhere, at Tauchira, at Darnæ, at Priansus, at Hieraptyna, at Arcesine, at Brysus, at Syme. I am not concerned at all. She loves me."

"She loves you," Deiphobus snarled, "and you will not fight for her. You craven! In your place I'd fight the world and heaven and hell, let alone one city."

"Yes," Paris amplified easily. "You are sure of your position or careless of it. You have been a Prince all your life. You were not a foundling, raised anyhow in a goat-herd's hut on the mountain side. I value my position, my father and my mother, my princeship, my ease, my popularity. Suppose they take my side. Fight! Let the Greeks come! I'll show you how I can fight! But suppose they vote to send her back. What then? If I attempt to keep her in spite of them, they might pack the pair of us off, turn us out of the city, shut the gates on us and leave me to fend for myself and her. None of that for me. They might stone us both and be done with it. No such death shall I die, if I can avoid it. Or suppose they are divided. Am I to ruin and doubly ruin the grandest city west of Babylon with rioting, civil war, massacres and conflagrations! Not I, I love Troy too well. I love Helen, and I love her loving me. But I love ease and favour better than any woman. I'll grieve to lose her, but if they say give her up, I'll let her go."

"Coward!" snarled Deiphobus.

"Fool!" Paris retorted.

Hereupon Hector, watchful for order, interfered and separated them.

Next morning the great market-square was full of the people, massed facing the terrace of the palace.

On the small raised platform was set Priam's throne; on it he sat, raised conspicuously aloft above the gathering. Behind him, on the balconies of the palace, were Hecuba, with her daughters, with Andromache and her other daughters-in-law, with the wives of the chief men of Troy. All were seated, and their serving women stood behind them waving fans. Other women of the palace leaned and craned from its windows or over the coping of the flat roof. On Priam's left hand, as being the object of dispute, sat Helen, muffled and veiled as on the day before, although the morning was warm and the sun's rays hot. Behind her stood Aithre, solicitous and watchful, her fan never still. Paris sat next to Helen and behind him, not seated, but standing, was Deiphobus. On the Sultan's right hand sat Hector, beside him Æneas and behind them Anchises and Antenor; these nine filled the small throne-space. Ucalegon, and the rest of the councillors, and Laocoön and Phorbas and other priests of various gods, sat in chairs ranked on the terrace to the right of the platform; to the left stood Troilus, Pandarus, Polites and others of Priam's sons and with them other princes of Troy, their cousins, and leaders of the warriors.

As the heralds went about ordering and quieting the populace, Paris and Helen leaned toward each other and spoke in whispers.

"You must not be afraid of my Trojans," said Paris.

"While I am with you," Helen replied sedately, "I am not afraid of anything, and I should not fear your Trojans in any case. I like them all but your dark brother behind you. Him I do not like and I am afraid, oh, Paris, I am afraid of his grim face and the evil soul that looks from his malignant eyes."

"Deiphobus," said Paris, "is not malevolent, only sour. You need not fear him."

Meanwhile Deiphobus, in even a lower whisper, talked earnestly to Aithre.

She smiled at him with a tolerant superiority.

"You need not say any of that to me," she said tranquilly. "My one wish is that my lady have her heart's desire. To that end I strive in all things, naught else can move me, and naught else is needed to move me to any subtlety of comprehension or swiftness of action. As for the rest I know not your Trojans at all, let alone knowing them as you know them. But my father was a king, my husband was a king, my son was a king. I know the hearts of any populace, of every populace, I understand the hidden motives which govern their souls. You are wise beyond your years, beyond man's wisdom. I agree. But do not suppose that I shall do it because you bid me. If I see it will win my lady's wish, it

shall be done. But I should have done it without your admonition, if it prove that I do it at all."

When the populace were in order, warriors packed nearest the terrace, farmers and herdsmen behind them, and swarms of slaves and women in the rear of the throng, they stood silently staring up at the terrace, platform and throne, at the Sultan and the notabilities grouped about him. The palace served as a background for the nobles, and as a sounding-board for the speakers. Behind it rose Pergama, Troy's citadel, all temples and towers. Against this splendid background, amid his setting of grandly attired nobles, Sultan Priam showed stern and dignified, his white beard no whiter than his garb. He stood up and spoke in no old man's voice, but strongly, audible to the entire throng assembled and even to the gazers upon the housetops.

"Men of Troy," he said, "I bade my dear son Paris visit the lands beyond the sea, counselling him to bring back with him a queenly wife and much dowry. He has brought back a mate queenly indeed above all women, and with her possessions such as all men long for. Much do I love my son Paris and greatly do I desire that he shall keep the lady of his choice, whom he loves and who loves him, of which indeed she has given great proof. For because she loved my son more than all else in the world she fled with him from her country, her folk,

her child, even her young daughter, her only child, and from much honour of kingly kindred and from high station, for she was a queen in her country. Even a kingly husband she left, for before she saw and loved my son, she was queen to King Menelaus of Sparta, an opulent man and a just king, honoured among all men. Him even and wedlock she left for my own son's sake, for the sake of my late-found son Paris, whom you all love throughout our city of Troy.

"Now and to-day we must decide. It is for you to decide whether we are to countenance the love of these two and recognise their union or whether we shall disapprove. It is for you to decide to-day, whether, in the first place, Paris is to keep Helen and all her treasures; or, in the second place, to keep her and send back the treasures, which were brought here by the zeal of servants and without the knowledge of either my son or his wife, or, whether, in the third place, we are to send back both woman and possessions to Lacedæmon, whence they came.

"If you decide to send them back, Paris will abide by your decision and his will be the only heart in Troy to suffer. If you decide that he is to keep all that he brought, war is certain, such a war as the world never saw yet, and many a heart in Troy will ache, will ache bitterly, before peace come after that war. If you decide to send back the treasure only,

war will you have as certainly as if you voted to keep all, for the lady you see here beside my son is daughter of King Tyndarus of Sparta, she is child of Leda, the lovely, and is called Helen, the pearl of all women on earth. So great was her beauty, even as a child, that, before she had lived thirteen years she had been three times carried off from her father's country by enemies eager to possess her for her beauty when she should be grown to woman's estate, three times was she carried off thus and three times rescued. Seeing that much woe was likely to come from contests as to who should be her husband, her father, King Tyndarus, a wise man, convoked to his fortress of Gytheon all the kings of Greece and of the isles, all who might themselves desire her or who had sons who longed for her. And the number of these suitors was fifty, all mighty men, all powerful kings or sons of puissant kings. And they swore before him, at his urging, that the maiden should choose freely which one among them she preferred for a husband and that each and all would acquiesce in her choice. Moreover, and chiefly, they swore that each and all with strength of arm and voice, with power of sword and spear, of arrow and stone, of men and horses and ships, would make sure that whatever man she chose that man should have her to wife during all her lifetime as long as he should live, and that if any one of them or any other man

should carry her off from the husband she should choose, each and all of them, with all force of armaments and armies and fleets should fall upon her abductor and bring it about that she should be brought back to her husband, there to abide.

"Such is the woman who has fled here with Paris my son, such the league which threatens us with war unless we return her to Laconia, such the war whose brunt will fall upon you if you uphold Paris in his possession of her. Ponder, weigh well the considerations and decide."

When Priam's speech came to an end there was silence throughout the assembly so that men heard their neighbours breathing. The Sultan seated himself upon his throne, arranged his robe, composed his body, settled himself and still the silence continued.

A far voice broke the stillness.

"We love you, Paris," it called across the marketplace. "But we must think."

Paris stood up smiling easily. He shook his long curls, which hung to his shoulders, flowing free after the manner of the nobles and warriors of that time. He was graceful and handsome, handsome as a god, the women whispered.

"Men of Troy," he said in a clear young voice, pleasant as the notes of a flute, "I love the lady here beside me and she loves me, as my father has said. I love her more than all the world beside. Companionship with her is dearer to me than life itself, death itself will be less bitter to me than parting with her. Yet I beg you not to decide as I wish you to decide. I say no more. My happiness is in your hands. Yet think not of my happiness, but of your own."

When Paris sat down Anchises, crumpled in his arm-chair, leaned forward as much as he could and spoke in a thin cracked voice. When he had ceased Æneas stood up.

"Men of Troy," he said, "my father bids me remind you that I, like my cousin Paris, loved a woman of a foreign race, a princess of Mazaca beyond the lakes which are at the bend of the Halys and greatly did I desire her for my wife, yet for the sake of Troy I gave her up and wedded a princess of our own race, even my dear wife Creusa."

After Æneas had reseated himself Hector stood up.

"Men of Troy," he said, "it is fitting that I should speak to you, for should you decide that

which will cause war, upon me will fall the brunt of the defence of all of you and of the city with my parents and child and wife. For I am the best warrior and spearman of all Troy, as all of you well know. Now I say to you this: If you decide for war I shall defend the city as best I may with the help of the gods, and with the help of the gods I fear nothing of Sparta, no, nor all the kings of Greece with their spearmen and their ships. But you should weigh well the kind of war you will bring upon the land. For Menelaus is a strong spearman in battle and he has many men to follow him, and Agamemnon his brother, King of Mycenæ and of all the North Coast is the mightiest of kings westward of the Euphrates and he has at his beck more warriors and more ships than any king upon the shores of the seas, and these two brothers, loving each other well, will not allow the other kings of the league to forget their oath or to neglect it. A thousand ships will they muster and to each a hundred men. Think well."

And when Hector ceased a roar ran over the throng and voice after voice called:

"Let her go back whence she came."

But the voices that called were few and the roar died down.

Then to the people arose Troilus and spoke.

"Men of Troy, I think it shame that we Trojans

who have rule of all Phrygia and of the lands beyond even to the Halys River and Mount Taurus, we who count as allies the men of Thrace and of Pæonia, we who are the sons of those who warred even to the mountains of Illyria, we whose fathers chased their foemen westward even to the sea of Illyria:—I think it shame that we should fail to support any prince of our house in any desire of his heart. I think it shame that we should yield any woman or any treasure or prize whatever to a Greek or any Greeks or to all the Greeks."

Then the assembly roared again, and roared again, and voice after voice called:

"Let Paris keep her."

But the voices that called were not many, and the roaring ceased.

Then up rose Laocoön the priest and spoke long of righteousness and justice and of the will of the gods and he concluded:

"Men of Troy, remember justice, and the will of the gods. Paris has said that his heart will be glad if he keep this lady and that his heart will be sad if she goes from him. You love Paris and yearn to give him his heart's desire. Yet it is better that his one heart be heavy than that many hearts be grieved. It is well for him that he should taste the joys of life, living with the woman of his choice. But it is better that Hector and Æneas, that I and

that each one of you who has done no wrong, who has violated no hospitality, who has filched away no man's wife or goods, should each and all of us taste life's joys safely with the wife each has won fairly, raising up sons and daughters to make glad ourselves, our parents and all Troy."

Then for a moment was the assembly mute, till one far-off voice cried:

"We love you, Paris, but we love Troy yet more."

And upon that the roar broke out, a cataract of sound, and all the assembly roared in answer:

"Let the woman and the treasure go back."

Then Deiphobus glanced at Paris and the cords of his neck swelled, and his hands clenched, and the sweat stood upon his flesh, but Paris sat mute.

"Will you let her go?" Deiphobus sneered in his ear.

But Paris sat mute.

Then Deiphobus, waiting for a lull, stood with arms aloft, gazing at the people. But they roared on and he glanced at Aithre, white-haired, pink-cheeked, beside him. And Aithre nodded.

When the lull came in the roaring of the people Deiphobus addressed them.

"Men of Troy, you would send from us this woman, the wife of Paris whom you love. But you have not seen her."

At that word Aithre snatched the coif and veil

from Helen's head, and the shawl from her shoulders and Helen of Sparta sat bare-headed, clad only in her soft grey silken robe, where her chair was set at the edge of the platform, in full view of the people.

For a heart-beat silence filled the place, as a field of the dead.

Then there broke out the sound of laughter and of tears, of men weeping and laughing at one and the same time, and men clutched their throats in dread of the emotion that mastered them. And they shouted and screamed and cheered.

And at the last a roar like the roar of the sea in storm arose and the people called, every voice together:

"Let him keep the treasure and her."

And the people yelled themselves hoarse.

And when they paused Paris stood up and said:

"Men of Troy, I thank you for this proof of your love." And a clear voice called the length of the market-square.

"We love you, Paris, but this is not alone for you. We say it for her."

And from all the throng arose the roar:

"For her, for her, for her!"

Then Hector stood up when the people were weary with shouting.

"Men of Troy," he said, "this is frenzy. It is fitting that you vote not frenzied but when calm."

But they roared him down.

"For her, for her, for her!"

Then Æneas stood up and spoke.

"Men of Troy," he said, "I am no coward, as you well know. I will fight not among the herd, but alone, far in the front, if you decree war upon us. But bethink yourselves of the many deaths of young men, of the wailing and weeping of their mothers and wives. Bethink yourselves of the ravaging and wasting of our lands, of the sack and burning that will befall Methymna and Chrysa, Eresus and Astyra, Pæsus and Artace and other well-established townlets by scores and hundreds. Bethink yourselves of the leaguer of Troy and of the shutting in of us all from farms and villas. Bethink yourselves of pestilence and famine which may befall. Bethink yourselves that it may be that the gods will be wrathful against us for the sin of Paris against the duties of a guest. It may be that sacred, wide-streeted, breezy Troy may fall and her sons perish by the sharp bronze and her daughters be led into slavery over sea. Bethink yourselves."

But the people roared:

"Let her stay, let her stay, let her stay. We will fight for her, for her, for her!"

"This is frenzy indeed," said Sultan Priam, as they roared on.

And Paris lay back in his chair, smiling easily with indifferent eyes. But Deiphobus sobbed in his throat, and his face, upturned to the sky, was the face of a man anguished but utterly triumphant.

V: PARIS

V: PARIS

"HECTOR'S death," said Paris, "has shaken me more than I would have believed possible."

"Despondency," said Helen, "I did not expect of you. I sympathise with your heart-ache, for I loved him dearly myself and I sorrow with you. But I had anticipated that you would, by this time, have recovered from your dejection and have resumed your habitual demeanour and way of life."

"I have had," said Paris, "during the dreadful years of this interminable siege, many bereavements, each of which should have left me plunged in melancholy, but I could never see any good in being gloomy and have always been able to shake off my sadness. I have been accused of taking my losses too lightly, of being unfeeling and frivolous. For the first time I comprehended how my revilers felt, and I see that there was much reason in what they thought and said. They upbraided me and I could not discern why; now I am overwhelmed by self-reproaches bitterer and more crushing than their invectives. For the first time in my life I feel

remorse. As I sit here or as I lie awake at night I review all the evil I have caused, the many times I might have helped Hector and yet failed to help him; all I have let others suffer for me without myself doing my duty from day to day. To begin with, I alone caused this devastating war."

Here Helen interrupted him.

"You are altogether too severe on yourself," she asserted. "You heard and saw what I heard and saw the day after you brought me to Troy, when the people at their public assembly debated whether I was to remain here or be sent back. You heard all the speeches and you, like me, saw the people swept away by their admiration for me and heard them vote, vote overwhelmingly, to keep me and to fight for me. You yourself had urged them to ignore their love for you and to decide whatever was best for themselves. If their decision was dictated by enthusiasm rather than by discernment and sagacity it was not your fault, and you should not blame yourself."

"I do blame myself, and with reason," said Paris. "If I had never brought you here they could never have been so carried away by your beauty and winsomeness as to vote to die for you. I should never have let my passion for you overmaster me as I did. I should never have lured you to yield to your feelings as I did."

"How could you or I," said Helen, "withstand the power of the most potent of all goddesses? I am ashamed of how we came to belong to each other and often I blame myself. But neither you nor I are actually to blame, but the goddess who constrained us. You should not blame yourself."

"I do blame myself," said Paris, "as does Father and as do the rest of the family, even Mother in her secret heart, though she never hints it, let alone says it. And the people blame me, and rightly, though they have borne all the misery I have caused without reproaching me for it. What they have reproached me for and what I most reproach myself for is the indubitable fact that I have shirked much of what should have fallen to my share in the way of actual fighting."

"You've done plenty of hard fighting," said Helen, "and some of it very brilliant fighting."

"My two single combats with Menelaus, for instance," Paris sneered bitterly.

"You did your very best in both," Helen asserted. "I, looking on, could see that in both combats you were almost his match. I prayed hard."

"For which?" sneered Paris.

"For both, as I have often told you," Helen stated. "And my prayers were heard and were not

in vain. I dreaded that he would kill you, for I love you so that nothing else in the world means anything to me except you and your welfare and our being together. But, while I passionately wanted you to escape alive and unhurt, I did not want Menelaus killed or even wounded. He did not deserve to have any harm befall him, does not and never has. I wish Menelaus were dead; for if he were you and I should be safe in our possession of each other and might have even a taste of real happiness, might even live out our lives happily together. But, while Menelaus is alive I do not, I cannot, wish for his death or for any harm to him. Vehemently and utterly as I love you I have an inextinguishable regard and affection for Menelaus. He was ardently in love with me and wistfully eager for me to love him. When he found that I merely tolerated him, though it hurt him acutely, it did not sour him or make him unkind to me, as would have been the result with most men. He was always not only punctiliously courteous but as unremitting in his attentions as any fervid suitor. In a very trying situation he behaved as well as possible. I admire and revere him."

"You never did love Menelaus," Paris amplified, "but you respect him; you idolise me, yet you despise me."

"I never said so!" Helen disclaimed warmly.

"No!" Paris gloomed, "but I have seen contempt in your eyes more than once and you expressed it emphatically enough after each of my single combats with Menelaus, though, after you had cooled off, you have always made wifely excuses for me, both publicly and to me alone. Don't make any more just now, they only sharpen my self-reproach. I know you despise me, and you have a good right to feel contempt for me. I despise myself. I recollect Hector's chidings. He thought I ought to be as pertinacious at the war as he was. Hector was a wonder. He had heart in him as unweariable as the bronze edge of an adze; a shipwright hews with his adze all day and, at sunset, the adze is no nearer to being fatigued than it was at sunrise. Hector's courage was as staunch as the bronze of an adze. No more peaceable man than Hector ever lived nor any man who less relished battle and even victory. But when, against his wish and will, Mars hurled him into war, he fought the Greeks as a shipwright's adze hews oak, unfalteringly and unflinchingly. He was just as brave and gallant one day as another or at any hour of any day. He expected me to be like him, and reproached me because I was, as he said, erratic and unreliable. Because he was always ready to go out and fight, day after day, because he fought just as well one day as another, he expected me to be like him. In vain I told him that

there was no use in my going out to fight on days when I knew that I was not merely not my best, but very far from my best. When I feel like fighting I am not only one of the best fighters Troy has, but one of the best she ever had. My arrow flies far and finds its mark precisely as I meant it should, and drives deep where it hits; my spear whirrs mightily and carries death on its point. My eye is so keen and my muscles so quick that no missile aimed at me has any chance of wounding me. But, when I do not feel like fighting there is no sense in my going out when I should be so sluggish at dodging that any tyro might kill me; when I should be certain to miss any foe whom I aimed at. When I am far from my best I should only mar our defence by taking my place among our fighters. Better for me to wait for the day when I feel my best; meantime I might just as well pitch quoits in the Palace courtyard or sit in the sun and twang my guitar. I used to say that to Hector, over and over, and I always thought him unreasonable and unkind when he reviled me; now I know how he felt, I comprehend how he felt, out in the field and in danger of death every instant, seeing gallant men perish daily defending Troy and me while I sat on the Palace terrace in the sun, holding your skein of yarn or playing you tunes on my guitar and singing to you. It not only looked

unmanly, but it was unmanly. If I had been a real man I should have been able and willing to fight in every battle, any day, as Hector was. I should have done my plain duty according to my capacities. I shirked it. I despise myself. I should have done my duty to Troy and the family and you, and I have not. I despise myself."

"I do not see," said Helen gently, "how sitting here berating yourself helps you to do your duty to me or your parents or your brothers or Troy."

"While I have been berating myself, as you call it," Paris rejoined, "I have been thinking out how far I can spur myself on and nerve myself up to help Deiphobus and Æneas take Hector's place as leaders of our defence. On my best days I have been excelled as a spearman by only Hector, Deiphobus and Æneas among ourselves and Sarpedon and Memnon among our allies; as an archer, since Pandarus is dead, I have no rival among us, for no Trojan of my time has ever been able to equal me with the bow. Deiphobus is almost as good an archer as I, but not quite. I have been meditating on how many good men we have lost since the siege began on account of the way in which the two Ajaxes co-operate, big Ajax as a spearman, mortal in his aim, unassailable behind his great shield, and his compact cousin with him as an archer, watchful to right and left as is his tall partner to the front.

We have never had such a pair on our side, but I am thinking that Deiphobus and I might make an even better team, for we are both superlative archers and capital spearmen."

"On your best days," Helen put in.

"I forecast," said Paris, "that I shall be my very best and keyed up to more than my best every day until I have avenged my brother Hector."

Helen turned pale.

"Do you mean," she cried, "that you intend to go out day after day and seek an encounter with Achilles?"

"Not alone," said Paris. "That would be mere lunacy; as well might an osprey attack an eagle; but I mean Deiphobus and I together, one challenging as a spearman, well behind a shield, the other watching his chance with bow and arrows."

Helen flushed.

"How brave of you!" she cried. "How venturesome! Yet it is not a foolhardy plan. You two might have a chance so."

Before dusk, however, she was panic-stricken with the conviction that any chance which Deiphobus and Paris or any other combination of Troy's best fighters would have against Achilles was too small to make her or anybody feel hopeful. She spoke to Paris of her feelings.

"It does not matter to me," said he, "if I go to

certain and inevitable death; I go. I have been too remiss too long. I am now thoroughly roused to do my duty as I see it. Since I have seen it, inaction means for me only the gnawing of remorse worse than countless deaths. I love you, and I love life, but every fibre of me is tense to avenge Hector. I shall defer to you in all else and cherish you as I may while I live. But do not seek to swerve me from my purpose or to tempt me to slip back into my self-indulgent, easy-going ways. I am resolute to dawdle no longer. Either I shall avenge Hector or I shall perish in the attempt."

Helen, as always, almost as a child to her mother, turned to Aithre.

"I cannot help you in this, darling," said Aithre. "I ought not to try to help you and you should not ask it of me nor expect it. Paris is right. He should have done much better in this war, he might have done much better. If he had acted as he should his magnificent brother might be living now, might have lived to succeed his father as ruler of Troy. No wonder Paris mourns and rages. He is too much keyed up for any consideration save vengeance to affect him now. Let him alone. We can only watch and pray."

Next morning Paris laid his idea before the assembly in his father's council-hall. Sultan Priam tugged his vast expanse of curly white beard and

looked at his handsome son, a faint gleam of pride-ful approbation showing momentarily through the pathetic dejection of his grief. Deiphobus could never be enthusiastic, but he was as nearly hearty in his expressions of approval as was possible for his cold, reticent nature and his dry, weathered appearance. The old councillors approved the suggestion as offering some hope of revenge for their irreparable loss and for a successful defence of the city. Æneas, after every possible speaker had said his say, stood up and spoke weightily:

"The plan," he said, "is good; even, I think, the best possible. But it can succeed only if the attack be delivered at just the right instant without anything to give warning of what is intended or to cause any suspicion that anything unusual is afoot. If you two go out together before the press of our young spearmen, one or both of you will perish, for the Greeks have a dozen champions any one of whom is superior to either of you as a spearman. If you wait among the press until you see Achilles approaching and then advance against him, both together or one before the other, he will slay one or both of you, for he is stronger, prompter, swifter and more deadly of aim than any man alive. Neither in succession nor simultaneously can you hope to overcome him if he sees you intending to attack him and prepares for your onset. But if he

be flushed with victory and pursuing heedlessly you may kill him and come off unscathed. This is the only chance of your promising plan succeeding. If he be in his chariot one or both of you should be charioted; if he be afoot you may both be in your chariots or one afoot or both afoot. But he must be so intent on attacking or fighting or pursuing other men that you deliver your cast or shot before his attention shifts to you.

"This is my suggestion. We have been inactive several days in succession, solemnising the funeral of our best warrior and best-loved prince. The Greeks, naturally, will rest until we again challenge them, for they know they can do nothing against our walls and gates, even if very thinly manned. I propose that to-morrow early I lead out the mass of our young spearmen and all our charioteers who feel fit, and that we advance towards the camp of the Greeks, where their reed huts line the shore about the sterns of their beached galleys. To a certainty they will, as soon as they see us advancing, come up against us with most of their charioteers and chief champions and a cloud of spearmen afoot. I propose no long skirmish, but a prompt retirement, as dilatory and gradual as can be managed,

so we do not lose too many of our gallant lads. I propose that not only the Scæan Gates be set and kept wide open, but also the Sigean Gate to the westward of them and the Dardanian Gate to the eastward, with a strong force of archers on the tops of the two towers flanking each gate, others along the wall above the long sloping ramp leading up to the Dardanian Gate and an adequate force of gate-guards at each gateway, including a body of practised and alert youths to shut and bar the gates neither too soon nor too late, and also big, burly fighters to hold off the press of foemen at the nick of time. Then our spearmen, doggedly retreating, will know that there is no danger of their being shut outside closed gates to be massacred by their pursuers, nor of being crushed in the press of their countrymen crowding to squeeze through a gateway, since laggards outside the Scæan Gateway may scamper westwards to the Sigean Gateway or trudge safely up the ramp to the Dardanian Gateway, for few Greeks will venture within arrow-shot of the men on the gateway towers or of the sentries behind the battlements of the wall above the sloping ramp.

"When our press of spearmen in its retreat is half already inside the city and Achilles is flushed with success, you two, ready by the Scæan Gate, neither too far from the city walls nor too near, may have

an excellent chance at him as he recklessly urges his team or heedlessly follows afoot the press of his fleeing foes. Some such ruse as this might entrap him to his death."

Ucalegon spoke after Æneas, approving his plan.

Next day it was attempted, none of the fighters, except Æneas, and Priam's own sons, knowing what was intended.

Priam himself, with Ucalegon and others of his councillors, looked from the highest of the wall-towers and on another tower-top was Hecuba, with Ilione, Andromache, Creusa, Helen, Aithre and others of the women of the Palace.

It is almost impossible for us moderns to conceive what war was like in those early days. The germs of strategy had already burgeoned. Men had learned to deliver their attack at one point, while attention was distracted by a feint at another point, as had Castor and Pollux at Aphidnæ. Even a frontal attack masked behind a sham semblance of general onset, such as Æneas proposed, was not an extreme rarity. But then only the veriest rudiments of co-operation, of subordination, of orders given and orders obeyed, had as yet developed. Discipline was unthought of, drill undreamt of. Men, men even with the best minds then on earth, went out to battle much as a crowd in one of our cities goes out to look at a fire, each man for himself. Organi-

sation there was none. Most men were afoot, armed each with a spear; the rich drove two-horsed chariots and had better arms than the commonality. The most the chieftains did towards commanding their warriors was to hold them in check until what seemed a suitable moment and then to give a signal for advance. At the signal, each thinking for himself, forward they went, at a cautious walk or at a helter-skelter scamper, according to their feeling at the moment; sometimes a press of crowded men afoot in front, sometimes with venturesome chariots in the lead, even far in the lead; sometimes with the best-armed champions far before the general rabble; but never formed by any system or according to the orders of any leaders.

The main gateway of Troy to seaward was not on the level of the plain, but on a steep hillside markedly above that level and was reached by a long, sloping ramped roadway which left the plain about halfway between it and the next gateway westwards. This, being to the left of the Dardanian Gateway to any one facing outwards from it, was called the Scæan Gate. It was, originally, the least important of the eight gateways in the outer city-wall of Troy and was one of the two which were customarily kept closed in times of peace. For it had been built as a sally-port in times of war, because no sally from the Dardanian Gateway could

surprise any foemen, since any warriors issuing from the Dardanian Gateway must run all the way down the ramped sloping roadway before they came to grips with any besiegers and must thus be in full sight of the enemy for a time long enough to enable their antagonists to make ready for their onset. As the Scæan Gate gave the promptest access to the plain between Troy and the Greek camp, most of the fighting during the long siege had been in front of it, since most of the Trojan sallies had been made from it and most of their retreats through it.

The morning was fair, with a deep blue sky flecked with a few small clouds of a dazzling whiteness. There was a light breeze, mitigating the heat of the brilliant sun-rays. As they meant the Greeks to be forewarned of their sally the Trojans set wide all three gateways at once and the elders and ladies on the watch-towers presently saw spread from all three over the plain many war-chariots, their half-broken teams tugging at the yokes across their necks, the two-wheeled chariots jerked forward by the pole connecting axle and yoke, jolting, lurching and bouncing, the waving crests of the champions and charioteers flickering in the sunshine, their shields glittering. Behind the chariots came a rush of swift-running, agile young spearmen, behind them the main body of Troy's

warriors, running too, but more evenly and steadily than the lads ahead of them.

Interspersed among the spearmen were archers, wiry callants, each entirely naked except for a leather cap, like half a melon, tight on his skull, and a scanty loin-cloth; and unencumbered by any equipment save a quiver of arrows hanging on his back, a short sword belted to his hip, and his bow in his hand.

The spearmen wore each a helmet of polished bronze with at its top a conical spike longer than a man's hand, supporting a curved, folded piece of bronze like a cock's comb, fashioned to hold a great plume of horse-hair. Every warrior afoot or charioted was protected by a leather corselet provided with a breast-plate and a back-plate of thin bronze not much thicker than a man's thumb-nail, and from the belt of which depended nearly to his knees a kilt of overlapping hand-broad straps of leather, the outer layer plated with thin scales of bronze.

Each wore a pair of shin-guards, called greaves, made of tin as pure as the metallurgy of those days could smelt it and therefore at once flexible and certain to cling fast to the legs. These greaves were not so much to protect the shanks from

brambles and thorns as to keep the lower rim of the heavy shield from bruising raw the upper shin just below the knee.

One and all, from the youngest archer to Æneas himself, the warriors were barefoot. Sandals were all very well for men on a journey or armies on the march, but to battle the men of those days went as barefoot as Zulus or Matabele of Africa a generation ago.

Each corseleted warrior carried a great circular shield, its diameter such that it covered him from above the left shoulder to below the left knee, made of bullhide stretched over a rim of artfully bent wood, tough and reliable, and covered with a plate of bronze even thinner than that over the leather of his corselet. In his right hand each carried two spears, one to throw and one to use as a pike. The sword at each man's hip was not much longer than his forearm. All swords, spear-points and arrow-heads were of bronze, approximately such as that of which we make our least valuable coins; steel was as yet unknown, and iron known only as a rare, soft and costly metal, used chiefly for decorative inlays because of its greyish colour, contrasting with the hues of gold, silver, copper and bronze.

The watchers on the tower-tops had before them a wide and magnificent view across the plain to the Greeks' low huts and the high stern-ornaments of

their ships, showing between the great mound by Rhœteum and the greater mound by Sigeum like the teeth of a titanic comb against the deep blue waters of the straits; beyond them the hills of the farther shore, then heavily forested, light-green oak, beech and chestnut woods below and black masses of pines above; the dark blue sky over all; the rolling country far off to the right; the open sea away and away to the left, beyond Tenedos.

This prospect they entirely ignored, intent on the outrushing thousands of their spearmen and the scores of chariots of their chieftains. The chariots they could make out individually, but from them, as from the masses of men afoot, the dominant impression was of innumerable waving helmet-plumes, some black, some blue, some green, some yellow, some white, but most, more than all the rest together, crimson or scarlet or vermilion, all tossing in the breeze, while from between them flashed the countless blinding sparkles of the sun-rays on burnished helmets, corselets, shields, baldricks, kilt-straps, and greaves.

The Trojan host poured on down the plain like the waters of mountain torrents spouting from three gorges in the foothills and spreading over a level meadow. From the beach the Greeks rushed up to meet them like the foam of a great breaker lashing up a broad strand. There was no impact of the two

hosts, no collision, no onslaught of either on the other, no engagement, no affray. Well out of the utmost reach of any arrow from the other host each host slowed its pace to a trot, then to a walk, till each was barely continuing its forward motion.

Then the watchers, even at that distance, could clearly descry a dozen chariots on each side make a curving dash noticeably in advance of their associates. In those days every man rich enough for his family to afford it and sufficiently endowed with strength, skill and valour to make the expense worth while, drove to battle in a war-chariot drawn by two swift and mettlesome horses, driven by a capable and expert charioteer. But those chieftains did not fight from their chariots; the chariot was a means of swiftly conveying pre-eminent warriors, unwearied and fresh, to the battle-line and of placing them just where they judged it was most advantageous for them. The practice was for the charioteer to direct his team, at full gallop, so as to swing outward towards the foe and return in a sort of loop, at the outer end of which the horses were slowed down, the warrior leaped to earth, ran a few paces, hurled his lance at the mass of the enemy's foot soldiers, if near enough to them, or at his chosen antago-

nist, if opposed by some charioted champion from among his foes; darted after his receding chariot, bounded into it and was whisked away out of range of his foemen. This exploit was regularly essayed with the turn to the right, so as to bring the shield-arm of the venturesome champion towards the foe at the critical interval between hurling his lance and regaining his chariot.

Great as was the distance the watchers on the towers could see this manœuvre performed by nearly a score of chariots on each side. But, after the exchange of aimed spears, while the Trojan chariots whirled about and carried their owners towards the mass of their countrymen, the chariots of the Greek champions, after picking up their masters, swerved again towards the city. This was the instant at which the archers on both sides would put forth all their strength, skill and audacity. But their gallantry was not visible so far away, nor was any effect from it discernible. On swept the Greek host, like a tidal wave, and before them the Trojans receded like dead leaves driven by a great wind; fleeing, scurrying, scuttling, jumbled, jostling.

As the two hosts came on, pursued and pursuers, the watchers could see the most intrepid of their champions attempt to impede the Greek pursuit by having their chariots driven in circles, curving back towards the oncomers, and threateningly swooping

towards them. These feints did slow down the pursuers opposite them and so retarded the general advance.

But that advance continued: from the tower-tops the watchers could see the fugitives dividing into three swarms, some making direct for the Scæan Gateway and others diverging to right and left, aiming for the Sigean Gateway or the ramped roadway leading to the Dardanian Gate. As the Greeks drew nearer, since, after years of warfare, all notabilities on either side were well known to all beholders, the watchers could recognise Ulysses, Diomede and Sthenelus guiding their teams in the hope of reaching the foot of the ramp before the fugitives or before the last of them; Idomeneus, Meriones and Teucer similarly straining after the swarm making for the Sigean Gate; while Achilles, the two Ajaxes, Menelaus and Agamemnon held on after those approaching the Scæan Gateway.

Already the Scæan Gate was choked with jostling, crowding, panic-stricken fugitives; the ramp filled with puffing men, already feeling safe and trudging unhurriedly under the arrow-points of the wall-guards; the flat, dusty, hard-trodden space outside the walls between the Scæan and Sigean gates was covered with spearmen streaming towards the Sigean Gate and safety; behind them the Greek chariots ever nearer, their charioteers lashing their teams, the

champions brandishing their shields and spears and yelling, yelling so loud that they could be heard above the all-embracing insistent scream of the chariot-wheels.

Yelling loudest of all was Achilles, nearest of all, the scarlet plume of his helmet waving in the wind, the sun-rays gleaming on his burnished helmet, corselet, shield, kilt-straps and greaves; his face blazing with excitement and the anticipation of triumph, his yellow hair streaming behind him, his mouth half open, his right hand brandishing his great spear.

Up to that time human ingenuity had created no more formidable embodiment of military power than such a tall, strong, agile, swift, unerring, valiant warrior, charioted, armoured and armed. Achilles, as the paragon champion of his time, was more terrific than any portent then on earth.

When he was almost on his victims out dashed, from where they waited under the walls to left and right of the Scæan Gateway, in the intervals between the three swarms of panic-stricken fugitives, Deiphobus and Paris, each in his chariot, behind swift mares, guided by a dexterous charioteer. As they came he saw them, Deiphobus on his right, Paris on his left, approaching him from nearly in front.

All three charioteers made their loop and swerve

at the same instant; at the same instant the three champions sprang to earth, Deiphobus a trifle nearer Achilles than was Paris. With unerring judgment Achilles faced the nearer adversary and Deiphobus and he, each with the short run of three or four steps always taken to add impetus to the flying weapon, simultaneously hurled their spears at each other. Just when Achilles had his right arm at its highest, just when he threw, his left arm concomitantly drooped as he balanced himself and the upper rim of his great shield sagging enough for Paris, spear and shield cast aside, feet firm on the ground, legs wide apart, curving his great bow into an arch as he drew the arrow till its barbs touched the fingers of his left hand, to send his light shaft true to a finger-breadth above the gleaming shield-rim and clean through Achilles' heart, till its feathers were left projecting hardly a hand's-breadth from the burnished bronze of his breast-plate.

So near was Achilles to the city wall that all beholders could see the whole manœuvre, the spear of Deiphobus flying past Achilles' throat over his right shoulder, the spear of Achilles grazing the corselet of Deiphobus under his right arm, Paris deftly tossing his strung bow to his charioteer and retrieving his own shield and spear from the ground; and Achilles, even as his lance grazed his antagonist, like many another man shot through the heart, putting

forth in his death-agony strength even vastly beyond the utmost he had ever exerted by intention and turning completely over in the air twice in succession in convulsions inexpressibly terrific before he sprawled horridly on the earth, twitching and heaving yet.

The watchers beheld Deiphobus possess himself of the great spear which Achilles had hurled at him, beheld Paris rashly dart towards the fallen hero, and, miraculously, before Ajax and Agamemnon, swiftly as their lashed teams came on, were near enough to prevent him, make off safe with his gold-crested, crimson-plumed helmet, the point of his lance, as he ran, neatly severing the chin-strap and picking up the prize. Both, after their trophies had been passed to their charioteers, turned, and, with Æneas and a dozen more of Troy's mightiest champions, made a rush at big Ajax, Menelaus and Agamemnon and their comrades, standing over the body. Up flocked more Greek chieftains, more Trojan veterans. One side straining to make prizes of the dead man's armour, even to carry off his corpse bodily, the other to protect it, to rescue it and its accoutrements, they shot, lunged, thrust and hacked at each other, their clash becoming an affray and, as more and more men of each side joined in or pressed forward from behind, spreading to a general engagement, a furious mêlée. This lasted until

the sun was declining, by which time scores of men on each side had fallen under the rain of arrows, the frequent spear-casts, the incessant pike-play and sword-play; not one of the most prominent champions on either side remained unwounded, and the fighters unhurt were utterly exhausted.

Then, toward sunset, the Greeks, by a spasmodic effort, drew off their champion's corpse and retired with it, the combatants thereupon separating.

All Troy was frantic to welcome Paris. He had always been their darling, but he had hitherto done little over which they might exult. Now, all at once, he had, in full sight of hundreds, carried to success a ruse as perilous as possible, had made a shot both difficult and effective, and scarcely to be surpassed by any bowman, had avenged his revered brother, and had rid them of their most baneful enemy; also he had been among the foremost fighters in the frenzied and protracted struggle for the body of Achilles, intrepidly active in the midst of that appalling mêlée, inflicting many wounds and safe out of it, though twice wounded.

The populace was delirious with rejoicing, the warriors jubilant, the chieftains exultant; all Troy, for the first time in years, positively hopeful. After an ovation in the city square their hero at length entered his home to relish Helen's congratulations and solicitude. Though merely flesh-wounds, the

slash through his right shoulder and the tear along his right hip showed how dauntlessly he had faced the pikes of his foemen, how near he had been to death in the affray. Helen, for the first time, was proud of Paris and showed it. She uniformly loved him, but rather shame-facedly and half against her will; now she admired him and glowed with her admiration. He revelled in the sensation of having made her esteem him.

Paris was entirely healed of both his wounds, in fact, not an unhealed scar was left on any Trojan champion, before the Greeks had completed their ceremonial observances honouring the funeral of Achilles. In the interval Paris had ample time to discuss with his brothers and father, with the Sultan's councillors, with Æneas, with other chieftains, with Helen, his plans for another exploit.

"It would be silly as well as futile," he said, "to attempt to repeat our successful ruse. We must vary our methods. But there is no reason why we may not succeed in killing some notable Greek champion at our very next sortie. Deiphobus might be the archer and I the spearman. But I intend to try again a joint and simultaneous assault at any and every opportunity; it matters not which of us relies on his lance and which on his bow."

"And which chieftain will you aim at this time?" Helen queried.

Paris looked her full in the eyes and then looked away.

"Obviously," he said, "there is only one man by killing whom I can end this war at one stroke."

"I don't want Menelaus killed!" Helen protested.

"I know," said Paris, "and I aim to humour you in all things, in so far as I may. But, in this case, I must think first not of your wishes, but of what I may do to possess you as entirely my own, as undisputedly my wife, and of how I may deliver Troy from its long agony of siege and bereavements. If I kill Menelaus the league which menaces us ceases to have any reason for its existence; the oath which binds together its leaders lapses; the coalition will at once dissolve; Troy will be saved and you will be mine and I yours till old age brings death to one of us. I must scheme to compass the killing of Menelaus. But I must not miss a chance, if any offer, of mitigating the siege by killing any other champion. Deiphobus and I shall go out, certainly to-morrow, assuredly day after day, until both of us are killed or until we have seen Menelaus a corpse."

Helen, her eyes downcast, found no words to utter in reply or comment.

At her first opportunity she spoke to Aithre.

"Fate," said Aithre, "is beyond the control of the gods themselves: how much further beyond any power of yours or mine to sway. What must be, must be."

Helen, at once poignantly happy and painfully apprehensive, could not but exult at the adoration of Paris by all Troy.

Priam himself said to her:

"If your husband continues to do as well as he has lately I shall feel not merely justified in issuing but obliged to issue an edict naming Paris as my successor on the throne. Of course, until our stunning bereavement, we all assumed that Hector would survive me and succeed me. Now that he is gone Deiphobus is manifestly our pre-eminent warrior and also one of Troy's most eminent councillors. He is in all ways fit to succeed me except that he is not only the reverse of lovable, but is positively disliked by most of my people of every class: princes, nobles, commoners, yeomen and rabble. My Trojans would never accept Deiphobus, now my eldest surviving son, as their liege. If Paris had not so brilliantly distinguished himself I should probably have felt constrained to appoint cousin Æneas as my successor, certainly as regent after me. But, with Paris in this blaze of renown and popularity, everything points to him as my natural

successor. If all goes well you will be queen of Troy."

Helen, from the gallery of the council-hall, from her balcony, from the flat roof of the Palace, had abundant opportunity to rejoice over the position in the community to which Paris had attained at a bound. The old councillors listened to him with respect and even deferred to his opinions; the warriors honoured him; the populace idolised him. And Paris was not intoxicated by adulation nor puffed up with his prestige; he kept his head and was modest in his demeanour.

Very handsome he looked as he moved about among his adorers, far more solicitous about their equipment than his own, giving advice about fastening a new shoulder-strap to a corselet, absorbed in considering the balance of a spear-shaft, bending over the hub of a chariot-wheel. Wherever he was, all eyes turned towards him; wherever he went he was cheered to the echo.

Paris had always been unsurpassably handsome. But, from his acceptance as a son of Priam and Hecuba and a legitimate prince of Troy, his beauty had been marred by an expression of easy-going, self-indulgent vanity, of indolent, languid sensuality. His face, handsome as it was, had been devoid of intelligence, almost vacuous. Now, transfigured

by his popularity, responsibility and opportunities, his countenance was irradiated by ambition, self-reliance, and high resolve. He moved in a sort of prismatic halo, coloured by the lustre of his feat, the hopes he had aroused in his fellow-countrymen, and the dazzling possibilities of his future.

Especially he was magnificent as he moved towards the Scæan Gate for his daily sortie: his bay mares caracoling, the pompons on their crimson harness dancing, his chariot bright with polished wood and burnished metal, his greaves lustrous, his kilt-straps brilliant, his corselet and shield resplendent, his yellow hair waving, his cheeks aglow, his blue eyes asparkle, his helmet gleaming, its crest scintillating beneath his flickering scarlet plume.

It was thus, on his way to battle, that Helen saw him for the last time, caught her last glimpse of him alive.

VI: DEIPHOBUS

VI: DEIPHOBUS

AS soon as she heard the rumour that Paris had fallen on the field of battle, Andromache went straight to Helen and the two widows clung to each other, torn by tempests of sobs, or through the more poignant intervals of tearless agony.

While they were alone together, both inconsolable and yet each somehow alleviating the other's misery, each finding the other's presence a consolation, Priam sent for Aithre. In his courtly way Priam had always treated Aithre more as the queen she had been than as the bond-woman she had become by captivity.

"I am stunned," he said, "by the loss of Paris, even more than I was by Hector's death. A second bereavement, so soon after the former, has left me numb. But, even in my daze, I am groping for light as to what I must do concerning his widow. Can you help me? Can you give me any idea as to what Helen will wish?"

"From the moment my lady, half unconsciously, sailed off with your son," said Aithre, "from the

moment she first gave herself to him, she has loved him devotedly and has thought of Menelaus only as an enemy, gallant indeed and impeccably chivalrous, but a foeman; now, I am certain, as soon as the passion of her grief has spent itself, she will recur to thoughts of her first and legitimate husband. Helen, wayward as she has been, is and has been amazingly astute. She cannily considered her fifty suitors and chose just that man most likely to love her unalterably, no matter what she did or did not do, to condone any derelictions, to remain unvaryingly gentle, tender, sympathetic and affectionate. From what I know of Menelaus I feel certain that he never has blamed my mistress, that he came here not to revenge himself on Paris, but simply to regain possession of Helen, that he cherishes no rancour and has not become embittered: from what I know of Helen I conjecture that she esteems the character of Menelaus as I do; that she reveres him as she must always have revered him, as must all who have ever known him; that she has the utmost confidence in his chivalric kindliness. I am certain that Helen will wish to be surrendered to Menelaus; both because she has the intensest horror of the miseries she has brought on Troy, and because she will, now that there exists no Paris with whom to be infatuated, feel her love for her former husband revive in her. Certainly she will realise that a

future with Menelaus promises her the greatest possible well-being and felicity."

The solemnisation of funeral rites for Paris consumed several days. On the day following their conclusion Priam visited Helen.

"Daughter," he said, "I beg your pardon for feeling obliged to intrude upon you before your grief has abated, with a discussion as to your future. But the conditions in Troy and in what is left to me of my dominions make it imperative and urgent. I have taken the liberty of consulting Aithre, who loves you as if she were your very own mother. She and I have talked and she tells me that she conjectures that you would not only feel no misgivings if we arranged to surrender you to King Menelaus, but would welcome the suggestion. I own that I should be greatly relieved if your inclinations are not averse to what would be our very best policy. It would end the war, relieve us of any further losses by death or devastation, and would, I think, assure you a future far more likely to turn out to your advantage than remaining with us. What have you to say to me about this, daughter?"

"Father," she said, "I have been thinking just what Aithre has divined. I have always felt keenly

for the many widows here bereaved because of my waywardness. My bereavement has intensified my penitence for the harm and misery of which I have been the cause. I eagerly desire that butchery and ruin hereabouts may cease and Troy revive and prosper. I ought not to care what becomes of myself, but I do. I am ashamed of myself, but from Menelaus I not only dread no vindictiveness, no retribution for my misconduct, but I do not anticipate so much as any upbraidings or chidings. I think Menelaus regards me, not as a woman culpable by her own misdeeds, but as a girl misled and constrained by the will of a most powerful goddess. I anticipate that he will receive me more as a father would his restored daughter than as an incensed and wrathful husband, and will treat me as would a lover his bride. I have no qualms at the prospect of being surrendered to Menelaus. His is not a secretive nature. I know him through and through. When we meet I shall not need to make any excuses or even to utter a word in extenuation of my behaviour. He will be frankly and simply glad to regain possession of me. No reconciliation will be necessary. There will be no reconciliation. When our eyes meet it will be as if he had come back from his expedition into Arcadia and had found me at home as he expected."

"Daughter," said Priam, "you greatly relieve me.

I shall at once summon an assembly of the people and publish to them the good news."

The councillors agreed with the Sultan that this was the best thing to be done and the natural course to pursue. They were all of the opinion that summoning an assembly was the most convenient way of making public the joyous tidings, and in accordance with custom, but they all regarded it as merely a matter of routine and entirely unnecessary. It never occurred to any of the princes, nobles or councillors that there could be any differences of opinion as to what they proposed. They expected a delirium of joy, universal acclaim and unanimous welcome for the suggestion.

The square was packed with the commonality, who knew only that a general assembly had been summoned, and who knew nothing as to what might be the reason for it. All faced the terrace of the Palace, on which were the leaders, chieftains, nobles and princes, standing in groups to left and right of Priam's throne on its platform, before them the chairs of the priests and hierophants. On either side of the Sultan's throne stood Æneas and Deiphobus.

Priam, his long white hair falling in carefully combed ringlets over his broad shoulders, his great white curly beard spreading over his bosom, looked less crushed by grief than the populace had seen him since Hector's death. He was manifestly

shrunken, his big frame emaciated and his movements slow. He was no longer a strong and hale old man, as he had been no long time before; he was feeble, but still capable.

When the heralds had silenced the assembly he stood up and spoke, and his voice had power enough to make him audible to the entire gathering.

"Men of Troy," he said, "you all know as well as I how much we have suffered and lost in this protracted war. All of our sea-coast cities have been captured, sacked and burnt; the lands which were their luxuriant farms are lying waste and untilled. We have lost many of our best warriors, among them almost half of my beloved sons. I am an old man, yet I long to live to see this terrible war end in a manner favourable to us. I am eager to see it ended, and I conjecture that every one of you is as eager as I.

"You all know what brought the war on us. My son, Paris, while visiting lands beyond the sea, became enamoured of the wife of the King of Sparta, wooed her, carried her away from her husband, throne and home and brought her to Troy as his wife. You, loving him and admiring her, voted not to send her back to her husband, but to keep her here as wife of Paris, my son, although you knew that fifty of the mightiest princes of Hellas had sworn a solemn oath, when they were suitors for her, that

whatever man among them she might choose, all the rest would use every means at their command, of personal valour and of kingly power, to ensure that she should remain the wife of the man of her choice, and that no one should ravish her from her husband, but, if any man should abduct her, that they would compel him to restore her to her chosen mate and would punish him for his temerity. Upon us, then, because of the infatuation of my son Paris and the Queen of Sparta, because of your decision to countenance my son's possession of her, descended all the might of the great confederacy, with, at its head, Agamemnon, brother of King Menelaus of Sparta and himself King of Mycenæ and all the North Coast and the mightiest ruler anywhere in the western seas. From their attacks we have suffered.

"Their object has been largely to inspire among all men whatever the dread of retribution for having ravished away the wife or daughter of any king or prince, and to make peoples chary of assisting such abductors; but more immediately to recover Helen for Menelaus her husband. To keep her for Paris my son we have fought and suffered losses by deaths and ravages, we have endured siege and privations, alarms and miseries.

"Now Paris my son is dead, fallen in battle, valiantly endeavouring to bring this war to an end.

"As he is dead there is no reason why we should fight to keep in Troy his consort, Helen of Sparta. She is entirely willing to be surrendered to her first husband, King Menelaus. I and my sons and councillors and nobles are willing to hand her over to him and with her all the treasures of her dowry and jointure, brought with her by the zeal of her chief bond-woman, without the countenance or knowledge of either herself or Paris my son.

"I therefore intend to send forth an emissary, with two heralds, carrying green sprays of leafy olive boughs in token of peaceful intentions, to come to speech with the leaders of the besiegers and to confer with them. I have no doubt that, when King Menelaus and his brother have heard our offer, they will accept it at once and will agree, if Helen and all the treasures are handed over to them, that they will thereupon launch their ships and sail away homewards, leaving us freed of their long siege and thenceforth at peace with all of them and no longer enemies.

"My emissaries will arrange that the compact be ratified by formal oath taken by the chieftains of each side, and that the oaths are to be taken before we hand over the woman and the treasures. I shall see to it that the oaths are actually taken and the compact formally ratified before I send out Helen

with her treasures to be handed over to King Menelaus.

"Because I knew how heavily your hearts are pained and how you will rejoice over this good news, I have not put off publishing it to you until after the embassy be sent or until after Helen and her treasures be surrendered: I had you summoned here at once into public assembly to hear immediately these joyous tidings. You may now disperse. This meeting was called merely that you might hear my announcement of what delights me so much that I could not withhold the knowledge of it from you a moment longer than was needful. There is no business to be discussed at this meeting. Go in peace!"

He ceased speaking and sat down.

As long as the old monarch had stood facing them and had continued to speak the populace and warriors had kept respectfully still and had listened to him in deferential silence. Neither the Sultan himself, nor any of his family or councillors, nor any of the chieftains or priests had the faintest prevision of what ensued. They all expected a universal roar of joyful cheers, welcoming and acclaiming the good news.

He had barely seated himself when the entire assembly burst into a hubbub of angry voices, drowning each other so that no word could be distinguished, rending the air with incessant uproar above the turmoil which filled the public square. So sudden and unexpected was the explosion that all the dignitaries were dazed and sat stunned. As the tumult and commotion increased Priam perceived that something must be done to quiet the paroxysm, or the turbulence would end in a bloody general riot or even might lead to an impulsive assault of the populace upon the nobility.

It was an immemorial custom throughout all the lands bordering on the Mediterranean that any one making a speech in council or to the general assembly held in one hand a staff, of such length that, as he leaned on it, its knob was more than shoulder-high on him. While the orator held the staff he had the right of continuing his oration until he chose to end it and to interrupt him was held not merely bad manners but akin to sacrilege. For the orators' staff (the far-away common-ancestor of the wand carried by titled ushers at various modern courts, of the drum-major's baton, and of the mace of legislative assemblies) was an object hallowed, sacred, holy and consecrated. But one existed in each community, made of the most valuable, most durable, most beautiful, most admired, rarest and

most costly materials obtainable; generally of that local wood which came nearest to possessing at once the qualities of lightness, toughness, durability and beauty; decorated, with all the skill possessed by local craftsmen, with delicate and intricate carvings, with inlays of ivory and mother-of-pearl, with bands and a knob of silver or gold, set with the largest and most magnificent gems. Except when an assembly or council was to be called the staff was kept in the royal treasury or city treasure-vault, laid away in its handsomely decorated case, lined with soft padding, especially made for it. When required for use it was handed over by its custodians to a herald personally authorised to receive it, and who formally receipted for it. Standing by the monarch or whatever dignitary presided in his absence, the herald, when any one stood up to make a speech, handed him the staff, and, when the speaker brought his oration to a close, received back the staff from him. In small councils or amicable discussions it had become usual for most speakers, if they expected to utter but a few words, to say their say without the formality of receiving the staff before beginning to speak and of resigning it when they had concluded. The like was true of respected sovereigns, princes or nobles when addressing a calm and placid assembly. But no prospective orator who anticipated the possibility of an interruption

ever failed to signify that he wished the staff handed him. And, when any one among the commonality stood up to speak, it was a mandatory and unalterable custom that he should utter no word until he had received from the herald the consecrated staff. Its possession conferred on its holder the rights conceded in our modern assemblies to the individual who has been recognised by the speaker in the chair. For the time being the holder of the staff was, himself, a semi-sacred person, to interfere with whom was semi-sacrilege.

For any one except the authorized herald and the orator to whom he handed the staff to touch it, even by accident, was out and out sacrilege, punishable by death. And that meant, not that infraction of the taboo might be punished by death, but that any one, man or boy, woman or girl, except the authorised herald and the accredited orator who, however unintentionally, touched the consecrated staff, was promptly put to death without reprieve or mercy. Death, to any one unwarrantably touching the holy staff, was inevitable and unescapable. Therefore, when the herald started to carry the venerated staff into a disorderly mob, those nearest him tumbled over each other in their anxiety to escape the danger of contact with the fatal rod. Universal awe of it generally abated confusion and calmed excitement.

Now, at the nick of time, Priam bade the herald hand the staff to a particularly vociferous and vehement young warrior far back towards the further side of the square. The passage of the herald plowed a wide furrow through the mob and so crushed against each other and the buildings bounding the square was the populace pressed to each side of this open swath that the yelling ceased for mere want of breath.

The recipient of the sacred staff, indeed, was not able to begin his oration at once. The interval served still more to calm the flurry. When he spoke he set forth the view that for Trojans, under any circumstances, to come to terms with Greeks, was an insult to the celebrity of their ancestors, a national disgrace and a shameful blot on the reputation of the city; that to yield after years of warfare was unspeakably despicable; that, after losing all their tributary cities on the sea-coast and most of their best warriors, it was their duty to fight on for vengeance, and not so much as think of submission. This utterance was cheered by the entire assemblage.

Another speaker set forth their hopes of ultimate victory: Paris had slain Achilles: they knew from statements of many prisoners that Ajax of Salamis, next to Achilles the best spearman in the Greek host, had committed suicide from chagrin when the

armour of dead Achilles had been, by the vote of the chiefs, awarded not to him, but to Ulysses: the Greeks were dispirited by their many defeats in assaults on Troy and yet more from the loss of their two best warriors: they would sooner or later become exhausted by privations, disease, losses and repulses, and would go off home. This oration also was cheered.

A third reminded the people how they had voted to keep Helen not so much for the sake of Paris as for her own sake. He adjured them to abide by their purpose and be resolute, vowing himself ready to die in defence of Helen and to retain her in Troy. Man after man in succession after him commended his utterance and avowed his willingness and readiness to risk anything and everything to keep Helen as a princess of Troy. All these hotheads were loudly applauded.

Against these utterances Panthus, priest of Apollo, made an earnest plea for the restoration to Menelaus of Helen and her treasures, reminding his countrymen of his address to them at their first assembly after Paris had returned to Troy with Helen, pointing out that he had, then, foretold all the misfortunes which they had since suffered. He spoke of right-

eousness, of duty and of reverence for the gods and asserted that all their miseries were due to their having kept Helen in Troy. His oration was listened to in silence and received no applause.

After him Laocoön, priest of Neptune, spoke to the like effect, but made as little impression. His eloquence was greeted by a menacing quiet.

Then Æneas made an address urging that Helen and the treasures which had come to Troy with her should be surrendered. He spoke of the prominent part he had taken in the war from the commencement of the siege and pointed out to his audience the degree to which their safety and the defence of the city depended on his foresight, diligence and valour. He pledged himself to do his best in any case, but asserted that after the loss of Hector, Paris, Troilus, Pandarus, Sarpedon, Memnon and many other eminent warriors among their countrymen and allies, it was folly to continue the war when it might be brought to a close by doing what was right and just and honourable in the sight of gods and men. As for glory, he maintained that lustre enough had been won for the name of Troy and Trojan by their successful defence against the longest siege ever heard of by the largest host ever assembled. He wound up his oration by reiterating his appeal for the termination of the war and the liberation of Troy from jeopardy by the restora-

tion of Helen to her husband and of the treasures to their rightful owner.

After him spoke Deiphobus.

"Men of Troy," he said, "I am about to address you in behalf of my father and his councillors, and in behalf of yourselves, your parents, your wives and your children. And also, to enforce what I urge upon you, I shall bare to you my own heart. In behalf of my father I wish to remind you that he has been since his youth heedful of the gods and of righteousness and has dealt with all men, alike with his own subjects, with his allies, with men of distant countries, with foemen, even with our enemies beleaguering Troy, without guile or deceit; also that without craft or trickery he increased the prosperity, wealth and prestige of Troy, and the well-being and happiness of all of you, until the infatuation of Paris for the queen of King Menelaus brought on us the horrors of warfare from which we have been suffering.

"Do not forget that, during his reign, no ally has forsaken our cause, and that, not only before the siege of our city began, but even since we have been beleaguered, he has won for Troy new allies, allies very helpful to us.

"In my father's behalf I wish to remind you that he and his councillors have made no unwise decision since he came to the throne. Wisdom has

been manifest in his edicts, in his decrees, in his judgments of all disputes and appeals brought before him; as in the conduct of the defence of our city. It is, therefore, more than probable that I am right in holding my conviction that his proposal to negotiate with the Greeks for their immediate, peaceable and final departure in consideration of our surrender to them of Helen and the treasures brought to Troy with her is a wise proposal and your disapproval of it unwise and foolish. I urge you to withdraw your opposition and to authorise the proposal.

"That you may feel, as you all should feel, that I urge this on you not from any personal motives, keep in your minds the share I have had in the defence of our city. Since the siege began I have fought in every battle, except when I was recovering from some wound and unequal to wearing armour. Among all your defenders only Pandarus among our allies, only Paris among us Trojans was a better archer than I. As a heavy-armed warrior with shield and spear I have been equalled by few and surpassed only by our allies Sarpedon and Memnon and among ourselves by my cousin Æneas and my brother Hector. And, as you know, I have not skulked or flinched, but have fought forward, facing the best champions among our enemies. Knowing me for a man valiant and truthful you

will not disbelieve me when I say that it is for your sakes and not for my own that I urge you to accept the proposal formulated by my father and his councillors. That you may comprehend how entirely I am dominated by concern for you and how little by my own desires, hearken well to me now. I have heard to-day hundreds of you vow yourselves ready to face any length of war and siege, privations, anxiety and peril, nay, even ready to meet death itself, rather than permit Helen to be sent out of Troy; so enraptured with Helen as to value her presence among you more highly than anything else, as to be ready to risk anything to keep her among us.

"Now I solemnly declare to you, men of Troy, that no one of you loves Helen of Sparta as intensely as do I. From the first sight I had of her on the deck of the *Nereid* beside my brother Paris I have been passionately enamoured of her. I was excruciatingly envious of my brother Paris, who possessed her and her love. Every day, every hour, since she came to Troy, I have longed for her consumingly. The sight of her is to me the keenest of all delights. So that I am justified in feeling that no one of you will suffer as acutely as I from watching her depart and from knowing that she will nevermore be seen by any of us.

"Yet, wretched as I know I shall be when Troy

and I are bereft of her, I adjure you, I implore you, to acquiesce in the proposal framed by your sovereign and his advisers. For the sake of yourselves, of your parents, of your wives, of your children, permit your chieftains, who are wiser than you, to bring to an end the fatal warfare which is ruining you all and Troy's empire and Troy. The course decided on by the wisest men in Troy is the righteous course, the rational course, the most promising course. If you decide otherwise I shall fight on, but with a heavy heart. I beseech you, do as I advise."

When he paused and handed the consecrated staff to the herald there burst forth a tempest of popular fury more threatening than the former outburst of the people. No one on the terrace could hear a word of what was said, but it was plain that the populace was divided into two factions, each intensely antagonistic to the other and ready to fly at each other's throats. Promptly Priam despatched the herald with the holy staff, indicating as the man who should receive it a warrior, long veteran. When he had the staff in his hand and the assembly quieted to listen to him he spoke indignantly, saying:

"You younger men who have come to military age since the siege began, who have not had to bear its hardships from its beginning, who have no recollection, as grown men, of what peace and prosperity

were like, have no realisation of the seriousness of our situation. You take the siege as a lark and the warfare as a sort of athletic sport. We seasoned men are fighting not for the enjoyment of the excitement of battle, but solely because we must fight or perish, must drive off the invaders or die in the effort; solely because we know that if we fail Troy will be destroyed. We are fighting to save Troy. Our leaders propose a course of action which will save Troy and you reject it. You are enraged at the suggestion of what is dictated alike by righteousness and common-sense. You will not have the siege brought to an honourable close by restitution of the woman and the hoard. You will have nothing but victory. It was bad enough for you to hurl us into the abyss of misery by compelling us to fight for Paris and his adorable mate. But now, while you prate of the ancient glory of Troy, you are so blind to all considerations of decency that you have the effrontery to urge us to fight—for what? For a widow! This is a thing unheard of. Many wars, many sieges, sieges without number, have originated in the abduction of some beautiful woman and have been fought by men determined to regain her and men resolute to retain her. But every woman so fought over has been wife to some man among her defenders. No city ever fought for a widow. This is absurd!"

He paused, gazing about him.

Shouts arose from all points of the crowd:

"We do not mean to fight for a widow!"

"But," urged the orator, "Helen is a widow."

"Let her not remain a widow," came back the voices. "Let her marry the best man among us."

"Whom?" queried the orator, a warrior, no subtle councillor but a man earnest indeed, yet slow-witted.

It was plain that he did not at all anticipate what was coming, for his face showed his amazement at the answering shouts of:

"Deiphobus!"

"Let her marry Deiphobus!"

"Let Deiphobus marry her!"

"Deiphobus loves her!"

"Deiphobus is our best warrior!"

"Deiphobus is unmarried!"

"Let Deiphobus be her husband!"

"Give her to Deiphobus!"

There was, as all knew, no tradition of any city, besieged by so large a body of enemies as had beleaguered Troy. There was no tradition of any city enduring a siege as long as that of Troy. Troy had held out against such odds for so long chiefly because of its mighty walls and wall-towers and gateway towers; but also largely because of the valour, tenacity and unanimity of its defenders. The ap-

pearance of dissension within its walls might quickly bring Troy to ruin. It was manifest to Priam and his councillors and nobles that the populace was in a mood which made it futile to try to compel it to submit to dictation or even to listen to reason. At all costs the people must be placated. Have their way they would.

They roared:

"Deiphobus!" until the herald carried the holy staff back to the terrace and put it into Priam's hand. Then they quieted.

"Men of Troy," said Priam, "I am used to having you obey me rather than that I should obey you. I rate your condition as one of frenzy, as a curse from some angry god. Yet all men, even kings, must yield to the gods. I yield. Helen shall be given as wife to Deiphobus, my son, and we will keep her in Troy and the war shall go on."

This announcement was greeted by an explosion of exultant cheers, and it was long before the cheering died, not until the people had cheered themselves hoarse.

From the balconies of the Palace looking down over the terrace and the square the Palace ladies had watched and listened; among them Hecuba, Ilione, Creusa, Dione, Andromache and Helen. With Helen had been Aithre. No more than the princes and councillors had they anticipated what

occurred: even more than the councillors and the princes were they aghast. When Priam's reluctant submission to the popular whim was greeted with the final hurricane of cheers, Helen fled in horror to her portion of the Palace, Aithre with her, hovering solicitously.

Once in her own bedroom Helen burst into tears and sobbed convulsively. Aithre for a time kept silent, but, as one paroxysm followed another, each more violent than the last, she strove to soothe her mistress.

Helen was far less consolable than just after the first news of the death of Paris.

"Nothing," she sobbed, "could be worse, nothing. Since I was a child I have seen few men whom I disliked, fewer whom I feared. I detest, abominate and abhor Deiphobus, I dread him, I shudder at the thought of him! I have loathed him ever since my first sight of him! Now he has devised this pitfall and trapped me in it, I hate him and I despise him!"

"Loathe him if you must, darling," said Aithre, "but do not make him out any worse than he is. I could see and you could see that what happened came about by spontaneous and instinctive action of the people, caused by the effect on them of the fascination you exert on all who behold you even but once, and which dominates all who see you frequently or associate with you. Deiphobus, in his

oration, was not craftily enticing the populace towards that determination at which he wished them to arrive; it was plain to everybody, as to me, and to you also, that he was patriotically doing his best to induce the assembly to accept the councillors' proposal and was antagonising and thwarting his own desires for the good of the city. Give him credit for that and for being taken as unawares as all the rest by the insistence of the populace. He was as much astounded as Priam or Æneas. Remember that he has never revealed any tendency towards trickery or duplicity, nor seemed guileful or subtle. In council he has been habitually direct and brusque; in battle he has been always courageous, often daring, sometimes even brilliant.

"Almost any prince as bold, waspish, pugnacious and moody as Deiphobus and as consumed with passion as he has been with longing for you, would have attempted to pick a quarrel with Paris in the hope of killing him, or would have laid some trap or devised some plot to put him out of the way, hoping to gain possession of you in his room. Deiphobus manifestly yearned for you, manifestly envied Paris the possession of you, as he to-day confessed to the populace; yet he never quarrelled with Paris, never acted or spoke otherwise than as his loyal brother, though he was always melancholy, surly and gruff. Keep all this in your mind, darling.

Hate him all you want to hate him, but do not traduce him or malign him."

Priam, not sending for Helen to come to him, according to custom, came as soon as he could, unannounced, to her.

"Daughter," he said, "I am horrified! I must be aging, though I feel it only in my muscles and not in my intellect. I have never made a blunder like that from the earliest days of my reign, not even in its first months. I am supposed to understand my people. I thought I did. I find I did not. I should have sent my embassy to Agamemnon and completed my negotiations and struck our bargain and exchanged oaths and delivered you and your treasures and told the people afterwards. You are a wonder. No man, no King, could have gauged how completely you have bewitched my Trojans. To keep you among them they are willing to endure anything, to risk everything. I did not realise it. I should have. But I can do nothing now. I feel for you. But I cannot help you. It is too late. And it is fate. You must submit. Fate is mightier than the gods themselves; if the gods bow to fate, so all the more must we."

"Do not blame yourself," said Helen. "It was fated."

Hecuba also came to visit Helen.

"Daughter," she said, "I comprehend. I have realised that you had long ago learned to love all of us except Deiphobus. And I do not blame you for disliking him. He is my son, but I could never love him. He is not lovable nor likable. From his earliest years I never understood him. I understood all my other children, girls and boys alike, but never Deiphobus. He was always a mystery to me. And never lovable. He was a peevish child and a sullen lad; and has always been a morose, taciturn, surly man. But he has been honourable in all ways, resolute in war, intrepid in battle, and has performed many gallant exploits. Try to make the best of him, for your own sake, as well as for the sake of all of us and of Troy."

Andromache also came to condole with Helen.

"I can quite well believe," she said, "that you are more overcome than when bereft of Paris. Widowhood, after all, is not as bad as such a servitude as that with which you are threatened. But you can only endeavour to make the best of it."

Deiphobus asked for an interview.

"Helen," he said, "I will not pretend not to be overjoyed that, by the will of the people, I am to possess you. Yearning for you has gnawed at my heart since my first glimpse of you. Never for an instant have I so much as dreamed that my passion

could ever win to fruition. What I never ventured to hope will come to pass. I am to possess you. And I hope to win your love. I know you hate me, even loathe me. Yet I hope to overcome your antipathy, to win your esteem, even your affection. I know I am odious to you; I know I am by nature choleric and harsh. But I pledge myself that I shall never be harsh to you."

"It is folly," said Helen, "to struggle against one's fate. I am fated to be your wife. I shall endeavour to be to you such a wife as I should be."

VII: MENELAUS

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I

WHEN the council of chieftains had assembled and all were present and seated, Agamemnon rose and spoke.

"Epeos," he said, "has in mind a stratagem which he thinks would hold out to us good hopes of success. He wishes to lay it before you all and to have your opinions on it."

The council was held at dawn, on the hard sand of the shore, between the tall stern-ornaments of their beached war-galleys to seaward and the long, serried lines of their low reed-huts to landward. The chiefs, wrapped in their ample cloaks against the chill of early morning, were all bare-headed. Epeos, dropping his cloak, stood up in his browned crimson tunic, leaning on the orator's consecrated staff which the herald had handed him.

"Comrades," he said, "ever since we began the siege of Troy we have been alternately unwarrantably elated and unreasonably despondent. We were never so despairing as just after the death of

Achilles, and quite naturally, since he was the best fighter the world ever saw. Now we are all cheery since Pyrrhus has joined us, and also naturally, for he is not only his father's successor, so that his presence here ensures the continuance with us of the Myrmidons, not surpassed as fighters by any contingent of our host, but he is also his father's son, and a warrior hardly to be equalled by our best and most seasoned champions. I feel more cheerful myself and the general hopefulness is good for all of us. But I must point out to you that we have no solid reason for feeling any more hopeful than the day we landed here, and we have many unpleasantly obvious reasons for feeling the reverse of hopeful.

"We have demonstrated that we cannot storm Troy by the fiercest conceivable assault. No matter how many of us hurl ourselves against its walls it is impossible to smash in or burn through the gates of any of its gateways, and it is equally impossible to scale the walls anywhere; the gates are too strong and the walls are too high; under the heaviest shower of arrows no ladders will avail us to touch the ramparts. The most violent sham assault will not distract the attention of the defenders sufficiently for us to succeed in a surprise attack elsewhere. Greatly as we outnumber the defenders it is utterly impossible for us to surround and blockade Troy. If we attempted it we should merely

cause our own ruin, for we should be so thinly scattered that the Trojans would be able to overwhelm and exterminate any one post, and to repeat the exploit night after night until we became too few to continue even the semblance of a siege.

"There is only one other way in which a city may be taken: that is by contriving to have one of the gates unbarred and set ajar in the dead of night just as a sufficient force stealthily approaches it. My project aims at capturing Troy in that manner.

"I propose that somewhere along this beach we build out of timbers and planks an effigy of a horse, placed with its head towards the city, large enough to have inside of it a cavity in which a man can lie concealed and keep alive and fit for two days and nights or more. Then, when all our arrangements have been planned out, that we raise such a general tumult as will give the impression that we are quarrelling among ourselves; when we think that our turmoil has been observed I will crawl into the horse through a man-hole in its back, you will close the trap-door of the man-hole after me, our host will launch our ships and sail away.

"Now I forecast that what will ensue will be somewhat as follows. Before the last of our gal-

leys has rounded Sigeum Troy's chieftains will be approaching this beach in their chariots, every team at full speed and the swiftest first. Behind them will come the entire mass of Troy's warriors. And, not much later, as soon as they have investigated our encampment and have made sure that it is really abandoned, as soon as the lookouts have signalled that our fleet holds its course, all the gates of Troy will be thrown wide open and the populace will stream out, every human being able to run or walk joining in the rush. They will spread all over this beach, rummage through all the huts, scan everything, and, of course, find the big wooden horse the most conspicuous object in or about our vacated quarters.

"No one will dare approach it closely, let alone touch it; for, at first sight of it, every one of them will surmise and assume that it is talismanic and consecrated to some deity. At first those who happen on it or run towards it from afar will prowl or circulate about it. Before long they will summon every seer, soothsayer and hierophant among them. The princes and priests will cluster about it, with the warriors gathered around them and the populace massed from the water's edge to beyond our huts. They will all jabber and chatter until they hush to listen to some dignitary. Every conceivable and inconceivable conjecture and suggestion will be ut-

tered and they will discuss and argue and wrangle. They will conclude that it is obviously a device connected with some kind of invocation or propitiation of some divinity or with the working of some spell or charm for enlisting the aid of some divinity or for concentrating or intensifying the influence of some divinity. It would be unlikely that a horse would be consecrated to any other deity besides Neptune and Minerva. As Neptune has always been against us and for them they will assume that the horse is consecrated to Minerva, who has been constantly our chief help and implacably inimical to Troy. They will assume that whatever be the efficacy of the horse, whatever magic inheres in it, will, as long as it remains where we placed it, be exerted for our benefit and to the disadvantage of Troy. But it is very unlikely that any one will be rash enough or impious enough to suggest that it be burned, chopped to pieces or pushed into the sea, or even that it be investigated and explored. It will be felt that to destroy, demolish, damage or injure an object presumably consecrated to a powerful goddess would be certain to call down on the perpetrators of the outrage the vengeance of the affronted goddess and upon all present, as abettors of the misdeed and participants in the guilt, an inexpiable curse which would be ruinous to Troy and would cling forever to all Trojans. It will be felt that to

mistreat or mishandle such an object, or even to desecrate and profane it by handling, would be almost as bad. It will be suggested that although, while it remains where it is, it will continue to diffuse an influence favourable to us and injurious to Troy, yet, if it were removed from its location in what was our encampment and placed inside Troy, particularly in the citadel among Troy's temples, its effects would be at once reversed, its energy would conduce to our harm and the welfare of Troy and would become innocuous, even salutary to Troy and baneful to us.

"It will result that they will raise the horse enough to slide under its feet something like a skid, will attach ropes to it and will put rollers under the skid and will drag the horse into the city, maybe into the citadel. By dusk they will be exhausted with roaming about our camp, dragging the horse into Troy, and the attendant discussions and ceremonials. They will feast and carouse in celebration of our departure and final discomfiture and of their triumph and glorious release from danger. They will all eat and drink far too much and the whole city, especially its chieftains and princes, will sleep sound. I will open the trap-door in the horse's back and will peer out. Warily and scouting all around, I will let down my rope and slide to earth. Then I will sneak to the Scæan gate and unbar it.

I calculate that I shall meet with no opposition, shall find no one awake. But, if I arouse any guard, I forecast that it will be only one or two less drunk than their fellows and less sound sleepers. I am a strong and crafty swordsman. I feel certain that I can unbar that gate and set one leaf ajar.

"Meanwhile it must be arranged that a picked body of our best men turn back after dark with ten galleys or so, land noiselessly in the darkness on the open shore south of Sigeum, and march swiftly and silently to Troy and the Scæan Gateway, which they must reach about the dead of night. Once a score of our champions are inside that gate Troy is ours. The rest of the fleet must hover off shore until they see a flare signalling my success and that one gate at least is open. Then all must make for shore and for Troy to exterminate our foemen and join in the pillage.

"This is my scheme and I see in it our best hope of success."

When he sat down Agamemnon spoke first.

"I confess," he said, "that I have often felt disheartened since we landed here and never more so than lately. But I am now genuinely hopeful of taking Troy. This plan of Epeos appears to me practicable, if modified in some particulars. But I am not going to suggest any improvements on what Epeos has outlined, unless those I have in mind are

not first put forward by others of you in some form. If we arrive at an accord as to details and resolve on attempting the scheme, I shall then offer a solemn sacrifice of general supplication, praying for the approval and aid of our gods. If the omens are judged favourable by Chalcas and our other seers we shall obey their injunctions."

Following their paramount chieftain, Diomede spoke.

"I like the plan," he said, "but it certainly seems to me to need modification. I am in doubt whether to eulogise Epeos for his hardihood or chide him for his temerity. Certainly I admire almost with awe his audacity and self-confidence. I think I have been rated, ever since we landed, one of our boldest leaders. Some have even said that no chieftain among us, except Achilles alone, has been more venturesome than I. I myself esteem myself as intrepid as any man alive. My capture of the chariot and team of Rhesus out of his camp was an exploit equal to most of those of Achilles and surpassed by few. But I was not alone, Ulysses was with me. I should not offer to do what Epeos proposes to do. If requested to do it I should refuse. I do not believe that I could endure the long uncertainty inside the horse. I should dread that I might go mad. Nor do I believe that, after a day and most of a night or maybe two days and a night and most of

another in a cramped posture, with insufficient fresh air, I should be fit to cope with even one half-drunk and half-wakened gate-guard. I am of the opinion that, if we attempt to carry out the plan which Epeos has conceived, the horse must be constructed to contain more than one man and that more than one man must be left in it."

He sat down.

At once Epeos was again on his feet, impatient to receive the staff which Diomede had resigned. The moment he had it in his hand he said:

"My plan has not been laid before you until I had reflected on it for many days and had considered it from every point of view which I could imagine, pondering it long and carefully and turning it over and over in my thoughts. I have been most concerned as to whether it will be possible to construct a wooden horse inside which a man could be concealed for perhaps two days and nights without being smothered to death. We can have the horse's head carved with ears as big as possible for a horse of its size and cocked forward, and with its nostrils splayed, as of a horse terrified, angry or excited. Inside the nostrils and ears can be perfectly concealed the openings of air holes. But the longer I cudgel my brains the more certain I am that anywhere else on the horse the opening of an air hole would be apparent to any beholder at first

glance. Even if some one cleverer than I makes it possible to construct the horse with additional air holes, there will be inside the horse perhaps air enough to keep one man alive, but far too little for his comfort and indubitably not enough for two men at once.

"And suppose we provide for air enough to keep two men alive and, if uncomfortable, at least not in the agonies of suffocation. I have meditated on this, for, like Diomede, I felt how much better it would be to have a companion after getting out of the horse. But, at best, it will be stifling inside the horse. And there will be room for no spear, shield, helmet or greaves. Whoever is inside will have no weapon except his sword with its scabbard and belt, and will wear only an archer's skull-cap-helmet and loin-cloth. Otherwise he will be naked. Now however stifling it may be in that hiding-place, no man will notice his own smell. But, if two are in there, each will soon find the odor of the other a disgusting stench which will become unbearable. I fancy that I, long before time came to emerge, would lose control of myself in a paroxysm of insane rage and would throttle my fellow-sufferer. Certainly I should be in terror of such an outburst of mania

from myself or him. I feel that I should be worse off, while inside the horse, with a companion than alone."

When Epeos reseated himself there stood up Machaon, the smallest of the kings, clean-looking, dapper and very neat. He said:

"We are all warriors together and I not the worst among us. But, among all of you, only Podalirius and I know anything of how men are made, of their capacities and limitations. We not only are skilled to bind up wounds and cause them to heal promptly and cleanly, to allay fevers and to cure ailments, but we understand how to protect men from maladies and to keep men free from disorders of body or mind. We know.

"Now, to some extent, both Diomede and Epeos are perspicacious, but their penetration is based on instinctive intuition rather than on knowledge and reason. I know. Inside such a lurking place as Epeos has conceived any one man shut up alone would infallibly lose his wits, go mad and become a raving maniac; any two men would fly at each other's throats; we must give up all thought of carrying out this promising scheme of Epeos unless we can design a horse capable of containing three men at once with every probability that they will not only keep alive but be fit for any hazard when they emerge from their prison."

After him up rose Nestor, tall, broad-shouldered, his long grey locks framing his ruddy face, his curly grey beard spread on his bosom.

"I am very much taken with this project of Epeos," he said, "and it looks feasible of itself and the comments made so far seem to make it look even more feasible than at first. What Machaon has just said seems to me convincing, so convincing that I think it conclusive. Let us assume that we are to follow it. In that case I seem to discern a difficulty. I think that Epeos has been correct in prognosticating what the Trojans will feel, what they will think, how they will behave, and what they will do if we sail away and leave on this beach such a horse as he plans. They will make the inferences which he forecasts and will think it best to convey the horse into their city. But will not a wooden horse large enough to have within it a cavity capable of housing three men so that they may keep fit be too large to be drawn through any gateway of any city, and certainly too big to be drawn through any gateway of Troy? It seems to me that it would."

At once Ulysses was on his feet. When the herald handed him the sacred staff he said:

"The horse must be made too large to be dragged through any gateway of Troy. If the horse we leave behind is made small enough to pass easily through any city gateway the wisest of the Trojan

councillors will at once conjecture that we want them to pull it into Troy; and they will scent a stratagem and will leave the horse where we placed it or certainly outside the city walls. If we make it far too large to pass through any city gateway all thinking Trojans will at once infer that we did so precisely to prevent their transporting it into Troy. They will then be doubly determined to locate it inside their city and into Troy it will go."

Then Agamemnon spoke briefly:

"Ulysses, as always, is the most sagacious and subtle man among us. Let us assume that a horse can be constructed to harbour three warriors; which of us are to lurk in it along with Epeos?"

Up stood Menelaus.

"I," said he, "should be one of the men left inside that horse. You are all here for me. Too many men have already lost their lives for me; far too often have all of you risked your lives for me. If any men are to adventure the precarious hazards of being immured as Epeos plans, I should be one of them."

Instantly on his feet was Neoptolemus, son of Achilles, called Pyrrhus from his red hair and beard and meriting the nickname, for he had a great shock of carroty curls and a vast sweep of russet beard. He was only a lad in years, but was tall, broad, thick, burly and brawny. His eyes, between blue

and grey and at once pale and bright, sparkled in his big, freckled, sandy-complexioned face.

He fairly snatched the consecrated staff before the herald had time to tender it to him.

"Menelaus," he said, "there are two men among us who must not be left inside that horse. One is your brother Agamemnon. He is our paramount leader. He must sail off with the fleet, because he must devise or approve the measures for landing unnoticed and for sneaking unperceived up to the walls of Troy at just the right moment. It will require all his deftness and skill to arrange that nothing miscarries.

"The other man who must not be inside the horse is yourself. The object of this expedition is to infuse into all men whatever a wholesome dread of the consequences of abducting any other man's wife and to demonstrate that such abductions are unadvisable; specifically by regaining for you the possession of Helen and the treasures carried off from Laconia along with her. To succeed we must sail home with you, Helen and the treasures. If we go home leaving Helen and the treasures in Troy we shall have failed. If you die, we shall have failed just as positively, even if we capture Troy and regain the woman and the chattels. If you die while Troy is untaken we fail doubly, for once you are dead there will be nothing to fight on for. And it

would be most shameful to us to fail after so many years of effort and such losses. Everything possible must be done to keep you alive. You must not risk your life in that horse.

"I am the man who ought to accompany Epeos. I am good at sword-play with scanty light, such as we shall have if there are clouds over a moon or there is a starlit, moonless night; I am good at fighting in the dark. I have no children nor wife. I am the youngest of all of you. I have performed no exploits worth mentioning and should have my chance. And, alone among us, I have a slain father to avenge. I go in that horse."

He rather hurled the staff at the herald than handed it to him. He sat down.

More than half the kings leapt to their feet; Nestor, being the oldest, was the last to come to his full height. At a nod from Agamemnon the herald proffered him the staff and he took it.

"I know just who should be the third man," he said, "and I think you all will agree with me, though each one of you craves the honour for himself. I will not name the man I have in mind, but you all guess and can let him speak."

He sat down and up stood Machaon, greeted with a rumble of inarticulate approbation.

"I feel," said he, "that Nestor indicates me, and I maintain that I should be third. No other man is

so likely to ensure all three being fit to fight when their ordeal comes to an end."

He sat down.

Then Agamemnon spoke again.

"I take it," he said, "that it is now settled that Pyrrhus and Machaon will make the venture with Epeos."

There was a pause.

Idomeneus rose.

"You all seem to approve this plan," he said, "and you all seem to assume that we are going to try it. To me it appears that success can result only if every one of a multitude of precarious contingencies turns out precisely as we hope; that failure is certain if any one of a myriad of probable menacing eventualities comes to pass. I think it far too risky."

Again Pyrrhus towered above the seated kings.

"Idomeneus," he said, "I should have expected to hear that sort of talk rather from Nestor than from you. You are, to be sure, after Nestor and Phœnix, the oldest man among us. But Nestor is old enough to be your father and he commends the plan. You never made yourself king of half Crete by any such timidity. You took chances there, chances which might well have daunted the boldest men who ever lived. Success in war can be won

only by boldness just short of rashness. I am for Epeos and I am ready to make the venture with him."

There was a long silence.

Nestor again addressed the assemblage.

"We appear," he said, "to have determined to try the plan if it be possible to build of wood a horse inside which three men may lurk and remain alive and fit for two days and nights or so. I myself do not see how it can be demonstrated beforehand that this is possible."

Machaon spoke for the third time.

"I can assert with confidence," he said, "that no three men can keep alive on the air furnished by curved tunnels through the wood of the horse with orifices small enough to be concealed inside his ears and nostrils."

Ulysses rose again.

"I have in mind," he said, "the making of air holes adequate to supply ample breath to our heroes and invisible to any casual scrutiny from outside. But I do not mean to publish my idea. I suggest that Epeos, Neoptolemus, Machaon, Menelaus and I be entrusted with the construction of the horse; that we be empowered to select a locality and to have it made sacred by ceremonial consecration, so that any unauthorised person trespassing on it shall incur the penalty of death; to surround the spot with

a fence of stakes, to guard it with sentries, sentinels and watchmen; to procure what beams and planks we need; to exact a solemn oath of all men chosen to assist in the work to keep secret the design and construction of the horse."

This address was greeted with vociferous acclamations.

Yet again Nestor spoke, saying:

"I assume that the very properly undisclosed idea of Ulysses will result in the construction of a lurking-place wherein three men will have air enough to keep them alive and fit. But I insist that we ought not to permit any volunteers to immure themselves unless we are certain that they will, at least, not be smothered to death. We ought to be sure that the inside of the horse is a safe sleeping-place. And I repeat that this ought to be demonstrated in advance, yet I cannot conceive how."

Yet again Machaon replied.

"What naturally seems insoluble to the rest of you," he said, "after my father's teaching appears to me simple. When the horse has been constructed according to what Epeos and Ulysses have in mind, with air holes apparently adequate, yet with inconspicuous orifices, with a man-hole in the back so arranged that, when its trap-door is fitted in, it is not noticeable from the ground, then Epeos will

pass the night inside with the trap-door open. That will accustom him to the cavity. The next night he will try it with the trap-door shut. Then I will do the like, then Neoptolemus. If we find it safe for each of us alone, I will try it with Epeos. If that succeeds, all three of us will pass a night in it. If that proves harmless we will try it by day, to test whether we can endure the heat of the sun.

"It will not only be unnecessary, but inadvisable, for us to make trial of passing a day and a night in it before we risk our adventure. For the nature of men is such that in a test any one might collapse utterly under stress of pangs which he would endure unscathed, almost without a twinge, if keyed up by resolution to undauntable perseverance."

After a noticeable pause Agamemnon spoke again.

"I am hopeful, very hopeful, more hopeful than at any time since we began the siege," he said. "We shall now bend all our energies to capture Troy by the stratagem conceived by Epeos. To him and his comrades it should be pointed out that, if they cannot open the Scæan Gate, they might open the Sigean Gate. I therefore intend that not one but two parties of our picked warriors shall cautiously approach Troy in the dead of night, one towards the Sigean Gate, the other towards the Scæan

Gate. One shall be headed by Menelaus, Diomede, Ulysses and Nestor; the other by Idomeneus, Teucer, Sthenelus and myself.

"Idomeneus has pointed out how many factors must concur to bring about success for us. No one has emphasised that the plan of Epeos pivots on the aid of Minerva. Whatever else might cause failure, we fail indubitably unless the Trojans assume that the horse is holy and consecrated to Minerva. We must do all we can to propitiate Minerva. Since Diomede and Ulysses are her prime favourites among us and have set up a votive shrine to her facing their quarters, I appoint them to arrange for sacrifices of propitiation and invocation. Let everything be done which should be done. Without the help of the gods we must fail, with help from the gods we shall succeed."

Whereupon they dispersed.

II

Dawn had not yet brightened into day when the lookouts on the watch-towers of Troy announced that the entire Greek fleet had been launched, that not one beached galley was discernible on the strand. The sun was just clear of the horizon when they shouted that the last vessel of the fleet had passed Sigeum. Not much later they proclaimed

that every ship had hoisted sail, that the whole fleet held on its course.

What ensued was very much as Epeos had predicted. Out of the opened gates dashed chariots, Deiphobus and Æneas leading, and straight at the Greek encampment they lashed their frantic teams; out poured warriors afoot, all running. Once they had made certain that the shore was deserted, all the seaward gates were set wide and the townsfolk swarmed over the plain to the beach, among them the carriages of the ladies and princesses: Hecuba, Helen, Andromache and Ilione, under a crimson canopy, in the foremost, drawn by cream-coloured mules. All, notabilities and populace, conveyed or on foot, long before they neared the strand, had eyes for little except the towering outline of the gigantic horse. All made for it. But they were even more daunted than Epeos had foretold. They hovered about it, but at a respectful distance. The rabble stood in awe of the stupendous horse, all black and grim, with its cocked ears and wide nostrils red inside, a gleam of white teeth visible between its all-but-closed lips, and its hard blue eyes never varying their stony stare.

As Priam had his team driven at a walk all the way from the Palace, since the jolting of the chariot jarred him painfully, he arrived after the crowd had collected and they made way for his horses. He and

Æneas, Deiphobus, Panthus, Laocoön, Ucalegon and other notabilities among the princes, priests and councillors, sauntered round and round the horse, pacing slowly, stopping often and conferring. Their conjectures and surmises justified the prescience of Epeos.

Presently Deiphobus disengaged himself from the knot of debaters and, along the wide, clear space or aisle or gangway which, at his approach, opened through the densely packed throng, stalked towards his mother's carriage. He was in armour, as he had, in his chariot, sallied foremost from the Scæan Gate. The sun-rays glittered on his polished greaves, on the burnished bronze of his kilt-strap-scales, of his scabbard, of his corselet-plates, of his helmet. As he strode his crimson cloak dangled behind him, and, from his helmet-crest, streamed the scarlet horsehair of its waving plume. But no braveries of gorgeous equipment could make Deiphobus look handsome. His knees under his kilt-straps, like his bare arms, were lean and stringy; his big form showed gaunt and bony, his hatchet face was meagre and its dry, sun-browned, wind-tanned skin seemed tight on his high cheek-bones. From either side of his hooked nose his dark eyes glanced haughtily. Arrogantly, disdainfully, he made his way between the lines of silent bystanders.

By Hecuba's coach he halted, nodded to his

mother and gazed at Helen. Her eyes met his coldly, almost contemptuously.

"Helen," he said, "father wishes to consult you. He asks you to come to him."

Without a word or nod Helen suffered herself to be assisted to the ground, and, beside her spouse, walked to where Priam stood, close-wrapped in his long cloak, between Æneas and Ucalegon.

"Daughter," said he, "can you help us to guess why the Greeks have constructed this enormous effigy and have left it here?"

Helen gazed at the horse, towering above them.

"I have never seen anything like it," she said.

"Nor heard of anything similar?" Priam queried.

"Never!" Helen averred.

"Then," he said, "it is not a custom among the Greeks to erect in or near a siege-camp which they are about to abandon a monster image of some well-known animal as an expiatory offering for their failure or as a charm to ensure their safe return home?"

"I never heard of any such usage," said Helen. "I never heard of any such thing at all."

"Have you never seen in your country any votive statues of animals?" Priam enquired.

"Often," Helen replied, "but generally placed inside a temple; as eagles for Jove, doves for Venus, stags or bears for Diana, lions for Mars, horses for Neptune or Minerva, cattle, swine or

sheep and goats for almost any god; generally of terra-cotta, painted and gilded, often of painted wood; never, except doves, as large as the creatures represented; sometimes in the court-yards of temples; occasionally in public squares; seldom far from a temple, and, if not close to a temple, always precisely facing a temple."

"Daughter," said Priam, "come a little this way."

Her white veil close about her hair, her white wool robe, bordered and embroidered with flower patterns worked in green and blue, yellow and red, clinging to her as she walked, Helen followed the old king.

He halted so that he and she beside him exactly faced the horse; so exactly that neither shiny blue eye was more or less visible than the other.

"Now, daughter," he said, "turn round so that we face precisely the other way."

They pivoted about.

"Look at Minerva's temple," Priam bade her, pointing. "Look at the gable."

They were so precisely facing the doorway of the far-off temple of Minerva on the citadel of Troy that they saw against the sky only its front and

colonnaded portico, but nothing of either side of it, nor of its roof.

"You may be right," said Helen. "This huge horse may be consecrated to Minerva. But I know nothing which would tend to confirm or confute your inference. The effigy of a horse, far bigger than a live horse, out under the sky, far from any temple or building, is as much a novelty to me as to you."

He thanked her and she suffered herself to be escorted back to her carriage.

When Deiphobus returned to the disputants he heard his father say:

"We must come to a conclusion before noon and take action at once. I agree with Ucalegon that this monster horse is most likely magical and probably consecrated to Minerva; that it will, while here, continue to radiate its malign force against us and in aid of the Greeks, but that, if placed within the hallowed circle of our citadel the direction of its potency would be instantly turned the other way and its power will then inure to the disadvantage of the Greeks and to the benefit of Troy. But, in a matter as momentous as this, I do not want to decide without having heard all of you. I think every one has spoken except you, Laocoön. What have you to say concerning this matter?"

Laocoön, a tall man, bony, with big joints and a head almost bald, replied:

"In my opinion this monster horse was left here by the Greeks to work some harm to Troy. That has been the opinion of all of you. But all of you appear to assume that it is what it seems. Now, to my thinking, the Greeks have men among them clever enough to concoct a trap for us which will appear precisely what it is not. I have no guess as to what this horse really is; but I stubbornly maintain that it is not what any of us have guessed it to be or will guess it to be. You all conjecture that it has been consecrated to Minerva. To my mind that is good ground for me to hold that it has not been consecrated to Minerva or to any deity. Therefore, I urge, let us assume that it is neither sacred nor holy and let us treat it as a device of war, not as a consecrated object."

Ucalegon spoke at once, saying:

"If this horse is not consecrated and we treat it as holy we may suffer some ill from it, but we shall not, assuredly, call down upon us any curse; whereas, if we assume that it is not sacred and treat it as we should any other structure left by the Greeks, their huts, for example, we shall, if it has in fact been consecrated, inevitably draw down on us, on our city, on all Troy, an inexpiable curse of sacrilege, which would certainly ruin us."

Every warrior, afoot or in his chariot, had, of course, issued from Troy ready to fight, if need be,

and carrying his lance. A spear was a cumbrous weapon, from seven to nineteen feet long. Besides its broad, sharp head each spear-shaft had, let into its butt, a spike by which it might be stuck into the earth, there to stand until wanted, in no danger of warping, as the shaft would be likely to do if laid on the ground, and as little in the way as possible. Habitually, spearmen stuck their lances into the earth close together, so that their shafts formed a bunch or cluster. Such a clump of spears was near Laocoön, who, as a priest, of course had carried no weapon. To Ucalegon's warning he retorted:

"If no other man has the courage to treat this horse as unhallowed, as a mere construction of wood, like a chariot or a house, I have that courage."

He grasped the lance nearest him in the near-by clump, poised it, took three running steps towards the horse and hurled the spear. Its head thudded against the wood and the weight of the long shaft dragged down the butt until the point was pulled out of the horse's flank and the spear fell to the ground.

From the populace arose a general growl, an angry snarl. Their faith in their notions of religion was intense and vivid. An accepted tenet of their creed was that any one slack or slow in helping to punish any one suspected of sacrilege incurred the guilt of impiety along with the perpe-

trator of the evil deed. Stoning to death was the local method of lynching an offender and action was customarily prompt and unanimous. Most of the men in the throng stooped, fumbling on the earth about their feet, those in front visibly picking up stones.

Priam held up an authoritative hand.

"Men of Troy!" he said, and his indignation made his old voice full, resonant and audible, "you are quick to resent the appearance of impiety and prompt in moving to chastise open sacrilege. But be it known to you that we princes of Pergamon, in the name of all Troy, made not long ago a solemn vow that, if our enemies launched their ships and sailed away, Laocoön, if alive, should offer on the empty beach a suitable sacrifice to Neptune in gratitude for his assistance to Troy and invoking his further aid in preventing the Greeks from returning here and renewing the siege. This vow must be fulfilled. Deiphobus and Æneas will at once escort Laocoön to whatever part of the strand he selects for the rite and will assist him or furnish him with helpers, as with whatever victim he judges best suited and with whatever else he requires. When the sacrifice is properly completed and the vow fulfilled they will conduct him here. By that time I and my councillors will have decided whether his act was, in our opinion, impious or not, and I will

myself sacrifice here a victim, asking from the gods their confirmation of our judgment. If our judgment and the sacrificial omens concur in indicating that the gods are not offended, Laocoön will remain an honoured hierophant of our hierarchy. If the reverse is manifestly implied I shall then and here turn him over to you for instant punishment."

This speech quieted the mob. Deiphobus, Æneas, Laocoön and some attendants went off, the nobles resumed their discussion and the populace, thronging closer than before, looked on and listened in silence. A series of controversies and much fruitless wrangling consumed the time and led to no accord.

They were still arguing when Deiphobus and Æneas returned, their countenances grave and serious.

Æneas addressed the assembled nobles and spoke loud enough to be heard by a large proportion of the throng.

"Laocoön," he said, "has been already punished for his impiety. Before we went off with him he had sent some of his apparitors into the city for a bullock and whatever else was needful and we met them not far from here. He selected as the place for the sacrifice a bit of smooth beach just before a small shrine of Minerva, built of poplar poles and reeds, thatched with rushes, and housing a statue

of the goddess fashioned of clay, painted appropriately and completed by a spear in her left hand and a painted shield of willow-wood set beside her left knee. We all inspected and examined the little temple before we set up our temporary altar, which we placed out on the beach in front of the door of the temple. Laocoön had with him two of his children, the nine-year-old boy holding the incense-box and the eleven-year-old one of the five-pronged altar-forks. The bullock stood quietly by the altar and Laocoön, the sacrificial axe in his hand, stepped back from him to get a swing to his blow. I saw him pause before he had more than begun to swing the axe, saw his left foot by a tussock of grass at the edge of the beach and heard him utter a low exclamation. He moved a short step, looked down at his leg, felt it with his left hand and said, as he let the axe drop:

" 'I think a snake has bitten me.'

"As he spoke he collapsed, crumpled on the earth.

"I saw a snake crawling away.

"The two boys pursued it into the little temple. After a moment they came out, each holding between thumb and finger a dead snake, clutched just back of its head, each nearly as long as the taller boy.

"One said:

" 'The snake had a mate.'

"The other added:

" 'We killed them close to the goddess; they had hidden under her shield.'

"As he spoke both lads turned pale, swayed, let the snakes drop and sprawled beside their father, quite dead."

When Æneas paused Priam spoke.

"Men of Troy," he said, "this occurrence clearly indicates that Laocoön and his two sons perished by the wrath of Minerva, in punishment for his impiety and sacrilege. This demonstrates that this monster horse is consecrated to Minerva."

After very little further discussion the nobles, councillors, princes and priests, all concurring, decided that the horse must be dragged into Troy and placed on the citadel before the temple of Minerva.

Thereupon the entire man-power of Troy bent all its energies on their task. A great force went to work to tear a breach in the city wall near the Scæan Gateway, sufficiently wide to allow of the horse being brought through it. At the same time all capable shipwrights and workers in wood were toiling with wedges and mauls at the task of raising up the horse enough to permit them to place lengthwise under its feet two long smoothed beams.

These they then connected with cross-beams and tie-beams, until they formed a sledge strong enough to sustain the weight of the huge horse and to endure the strain of its being dragged forward. As soon as the sledge was completed they attached to the front ends of its runner-beams long ropes, three to each runner, and at each of these scores of strong men tugged, while the awe-struck and reverential band in charge of the horse put rollers under the runner-beams. The vast weight yielded to the force applied and slid forward. They had it up to the walls by the time the breach would admit it. The moment it was inside the walls all who could help without hindering set frantically to work to close the breach and restore the fortifications to their former impregnability. Others dragged on the horse along one of the main streets into the public square. There they left it, meaning to haul it up the slope to the citadel next day. All then concentrated their efforts on finishing the reconstruction of the wall where the breach had been made. This was fully accomplished by sunset.

Thereupon it was proclaimed throughout the city that there should be feasting and rejoicing in thanksgiving for their glorious deliverance.

III

But four guards had been left inside the closed gates at the Scæan Gateway. Three roused. Pyrrhus killed them in succession as if they had been sheep, each with one thrust, and so swiftly that not one had time to utter more than a single choked, gurgling cry. Epeos skewered the fourth, still fast asleep. The gates had been merely barred; the bar-wedges barely thrust in, not one pushed tight; the pegs merely stuck in the wedge holes, not hammered home. With little noise Pyrrhus lifted the bars clear and one leaf of the gates gave at their first pull. Anxiously Machaon peered through the opening while Pyrrhus and Epeos tugged at the thick, solid, heavy gate.

The sky was almost clear, the stars obscured only here and there by small scattered clouds. The late half-moon had barely risen. Faint as was the light there was enough of a glimmer for Machaon to descry many helmet-plumes, helmet-crests, helmet-tops close together just outside the gates; and, even before he spoke, he divined that the man nearest the gates was Menelaus. In a moment both leaves of the gates were set wide.

By prearrangement, with but few words uttered, Epeos headed the forlorn hope chosen to make a dash along the inner side of the city wall and open

the Sigean Gate; Pyrrhus and Machaon led the warriors massed behind the chieftains; while Menelaus, Diomede, Ulysses and Nestor, with but eight picked spearmen, two encumbered by the weight of a massive log or beam carried on their shoulders, set off on their special main errand. Each was helmeted, corseleted, greaved and carried his big round shield and long lance. Ulysses and Menelaus in the lead, five behind each, feeling their way along the house-walls on either side, keeping in their shadow, they crept up the fairly straight street which ran from the Scæan Gateway to the city square; Ulysses in the lead, the rest in single file after him, Diomede last, they groped and picked their way through the labyrinth of narrow streets and crooked alleys which they threaded behind him as he essayed to guide them. When Ulysses paused Diomede and Menelaus each bade four spearmen bar the street ten paces ahead and behind. Ulysses, leaning against first one house-wall and then the other, peered upwards, conning what he could see against the sky of the copings along the house-roofs.

"Are you sure?" Menelaus whispered.

"Not sure," Ulysses admitted, "but putting together what we have tortured out of the various prisoners and what little I can recall of what I caught glimpses of on my embassy, this is the door to his wing of the Palace. When we break in, if

we encounter no opposition, or as soon as we overcome it, you, Diomede, dash out here again to guard us against any organised rescue or chance attack from outside. If I am not busy otherwise or as soon as I am free, I'll make it my business to find the passage communicating with the main Palace and either stand guard there or bar the door, if there is a door and it can be barred on this side. If I bar it I'll at once return to aid Menelaus."

As he ceased whispering the four, heads together, heard, faint and far-off, a cheer, then din and hubbub, then another cheer.

"We must hurry," said Ulysses.

Nestor loosened his sword in its sheath and, spear in hand, took his station facing the door, but a little up street from it and to the left of his companions. They laid their spears on the pavement close to the foot of the blank house-wall opposite the door, above them they leaned their shields against it, and then, strainingly, lifted from the uneven, slippery flags the log which the spearmen had laid there. When all three had gripped it to their liking and held it poised, butt pointing at the door, they stepped back half a pace to swing it.

At that instant the door opened.

A woman's figure showed in the doorway, outlined against the dim light which filled the white-walled room inside.

Against the light from behind her Nestor and Menelaus recognised Aithre.

"Take your time," she said evenly. "He is dead drunk and sound asleep. He will not wake up."

The three put down the log, noiselessly.

Diomede, without a sound, lifted his shield from against the opposite wall, slid his left arm under the strap, gripped its rim-thong, and, reaching out with his right hand, grasped his lance. Then he stepped aside, down street, out of the light from the doorway. Aithre watched him go.

Nestor, on the contrary, disembarrassed himself of his lance and shield, placing them by the others. Then, after Menelaus and Ulysses, he entered the house, Aithre standing aside for them, and, when Nestor had passed in, shutting the door.

The small vestibule-room had an inner door facing the street door. On a marble console to the right stood a small bronze lamp, a mere oval oil-boat, provided with a handle like a big finger-ring and with a wick protruding from a hole in the rim opposite the handle. By its light the four surveyed each other. The years had hardly altered Aithre, tall, spare, dignified, her kindly face calm, her shapely head crowned by her grey hair.

"Why did you open the door?" Ulysses asked.

"I was on the roof," she said, "for I could not sleep and my room was hot. I was leaning over the coping. Even in the darkness I counted twelve of you, made sure that your helmet-plumes were Greek, and recognised Nestor's outline. I came down here, lit the lamp (no danger of waking him with the click of steel on flint), and then I listened through the door, heard much of what you said and recognised your voices."

"Is there an inner passageway connecting this wing with the main Palace?" Ulysses queried.

"There is," Aithre answered, "and I shut and barred its door as I came down here from the roof. No one coming from that direction can attack you unawares. No one can open that door from the other side, and we can hear any attempt to break through it."

"Where is Helen?" Menelaus demanded.

"On my bed, poor child," said Aithre, "and I think she is asleep. Deiphobus is on their bed, snoring. He was drunk, dead drunk, before he went to sleep. He will not wake. You can tie him, hand and foot, before he wakes."

"Or stab him while he sleeps," Menelaus growled.

"He deserves no such easy death," Aithre stated bitterly.

"Has he been cruel to her?" Menelaus demanded.

"He promised to be kind to her," Aithre answered, "and I think he intended to keep his pledge. But he is too malevolent, malignant, churlish and brutal to be kind to any one. He has never beaten her, never, I think, struck her even once. But since he realised her unalterable dislike of him, her strong repugnance to him, her detestation of him, her abomination of him; since he realised that he not only could not make her love him, but that she loathed him more and more from day to day, that she would always hate him, he has grown continually more and more gruff, boorish, sarcastic, acrimonious and surly. He has uniformly tortured her with whatever anguish can be inflicted by taunts, gibes, scorn, sneers and harsh looks. She has been suffering horribly."

"Have you more lamps?" Ulysses asked.

Aithre produced three from under the console. Nestor lighted one at the lamp already burning; the three loosened their swords in their sheaths.

"Show us his room," said Menelaus.

They paused at the door to which she guided them.

"Wait for us here," said Menelaus, as they entered softly, Nestor last, with the lamp, and closing the door after him.

Aithre heard no sounds of a struggle.

When the door was reopened she could see Dei-

phobus, flat on his back, tightly trussed hand and foot and securely bound to the bed-frame. Nestor stood beside the foot of the bed, holding the lamp aloft in his right hand.

"Lead me to Helen," said Menelaus, and went off with Aithre, Ulysses remaining with Nestor.

When Menelaus returned Helen walked behind him.

They entered the splendidly decorated bedroom.

Deiphobus, no longer straining uselessly at his bonds, lay still, uttering no sound, only his eyes moving.

"Helen," Menelaus queried, "has this man been unkind to you?"

"He promised to be kind," said Helen, "and I think he meant it. But he is unkind by nature. He has never beaten me, nor so much as raised a hand to me. But he has made me suffer agonies from day to day. Life with him has been one long insult and he knew I felt it that and did all he could to make me feel it more unbearably."

"Nestor," said Menelaus, "take charge of Helen. You and she and Aithre can wait for us outside. Ulysses and I will settle with this man."

And, when Helen and Aithre and Nestor had left the room, Ulysses closed the door after them.

AFTERWORD

These tales are the outcome of years of pondering on the possible historical events out of which grew the legends embodied in the Homeric tale of Troy.